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Greek Epic Parody

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SIGNED DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis has been composed solely by myself and that it has not been submitted, in whole or in part, in any previous application for a degree. Except where stated otherwise by reference or acknowledgement, the work presented is entirely my own.

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Abstract

In this work, I will investigate the historical origins and the most essential features of Greek epic parody, a literary genre that has its roots in the archaic stages of Greek literature but that was formally codified in the fifth century BC. The aim of this work is to provide an overview of this genre through a thematic study of its poems and its literary and historical contextualisation. This thesis is divided into five chapters. In the first chapter, I will focus on the etymological and semantic analysis of the Greek name of the genre, παρῳδία (*parōidia*), in order to shed some light on its ambiguous meaning. This will lead to the identification of the surviving poems which constitute the corpus of the genre and the starting point for the analysis of its features in the subsequent chapters. In this chapter, I will also examine the sources on *parōidia* afforded by stone inscriptions. In the second chapter, I will study the peculiar nature and the principal techniques of parodic humour and I will identify them in earlier and contemporary poems. The third chapter explores the popular elements attested in the extant poems of the genre. In the fourth chapter, I will highlight the importance of the hexametric metre for the definition of *parōidia* and I will investigate the practice of mixing hexameters and *iamboi* for humorous purposes. The last chapter analyses the inherent criticism which characterises Greek epic parody.

Lay Summary

In Greek society and literature, the importance of epic was exceptional. Homer, Hesiod and the poems of the Epic Cycle played a pivotal role for the entire Greek cultural tradition: they were permanently quoted and constituted a benchmark for any poetical and, more broadly, literary discourse. Epic poems constituted a 'tribal Encyclopaedia' which permeated Greek society in its entirety and were at the very basis of the Greek educational system: the plurality of channels through which epic spread and its continuous existence in any literary discourse proves its relevance throughout Greek society. As a consequence, Greek epic represented a privileged subject also for comic reworkings that date back to the very origins of Greek literature. Despite their widespread diffusion, classical scholarship as a rule has employed the expression 'epic parody' to describe them without giving a satisfactory account of their peculiarities. More precisely, two main values have been given to the notion of epic parody in classical studies. On the one hand, 'epic parody' has been understood as a form of comic (even minor), light-hearted reshaping of epic models, well attested in several literary genres. On the other hand, the word has been used to identify an autonomous genre, codified in the fifth century BC and characterised by some distinctive features. The expression 'epic parody', therefore, has become a generic and very ambiguous label which includes, under its lexical and semantic umbrella, a wide range of analogous but different concepts. In turn, the failure to offer a categorisation of the 'parodic' phenomenon by modern scholarship has caused some lexical confusion. This thesis aims to shed some light on the confusing sphere of Greek epic parody by making some clarifications on its ambiguous notion in antiquity (ch. 1) and by offering a study of the most essential features of the genre as it was codified during the classical period (fifth and fourth century BC), namely its humorous contents and comic techniques (ch. 2), its connection with popular culture (ch. 3), its peculiarity of playing with metres (ch. 4) and its inherently critical nature (ch. 5). The evidence for the classical genre of Greek epic parody will be regularly compared with earlier and contemporary literature in order to contextualise it in its literary and historical milieu.

Aknowledgments

My research project started as a critical edition of the most important fragments of Greek epic parody. It was conceived as the natural continuation of my MA thesis, devoted to the parodic poet Hegemon of Thasos, which I wrote at the University of Bologna under the supervision of Proff. Federico Condello and Camillo Neri. I am grateful to them for introducing me to the world of research and for encouraging me to undertake a PhD in Classics.

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Contents

Abbreviations

ARV	*Attic Red-Figure Vase-Painters*, ed. J.D. Beazley, Oxford, 1963[2]
CGFPR	*Comicorum Graecorum Fragmenta in Papyris Reperta*, ed. C. Austin, Berlin 1973
CEG	*Carmina Epigraphica Graeca: saeculorum VIII–V a. Chr. n.*, ed. P.A. Hansen, Berlin and New York, 1983–9
CPG	*Corpus Paroemiographorum Graecorum*, edd. E.L. Leutsch and F.G. Schneidewin, Göttingen, 1839–51
DELG	*Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque. Histoire des mots*, ed. P. Chantraine, Paris, 1968
DK	*Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, edd. H. Diels and W. Kranz, Berlin, 1954[7]
DNP	*Der neue Pauly. Enzyklopädie der Antike*, edd. H. Cancik and H. Schneider, Stuttgart, 1996–2002
EDG	*Etymological Dictionary of Greek*, ed. R. Beekes, Leiden, 2010
EGF	*Epicorum Graecorum Fragmenta*, ed. M. Davies, Göttingen, 1988
FGrH	*Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker*, ed. F. Jacoby, Berlin and Leiden, 1923–58
IEG	*Iambi et Elegi Graeci*, ed. M.L. West, Oxford, 1989[2]–1992[2]
IG	*Inscriptiones Graecae*, Berlin, 1873–
KA	*Poetae Comici Graeci*, edd. R. Kassel and C. Austin, Berlin and New York, 1983–2001
LSCG	*Les lois sacrées des cités grecques*, ed. F.S. Sokolowsky, Paris 1969
LSJ	*A Greek-English Lexicon*, edd. H.G. Lidell, R. Scott and H.S. Jones, Oxford, 1940[9] (with a revised supplement, 1996 = LSJ Suppl.)
MW	*Fragmenta Hesiodea*, edd. R. Merkelbach and M.L. West, 1967, Oxford

OCD	*Oxford Classical Dictionary*, edd. S. Hornblower and A. Spawforth, Oxford 1996[3]
OED	*Oxford English Dictionary*, ed. A. Stevenson, Oxford, 2010[3]
PEG	*Poetarum Epicorum Graecorum Testimonia et Fragmenta*, ed. A.B. Bernabé, Berlin, Munich and Stuttgart, 1987–2004
PETF	*Poetarum Elegiacorum Testimonia et Fragmenta*, edd. B. Gentili and C. Prato, Leipzig, 1985–8
PLG	*Poetae Lyrici Graeci*, ed. T. Bergk, Leipzig, 1914–23
PMG	*Poetae Melici Graeci*, ed. D.L. Page, Oxford, 1962
P.Oxy.	*Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, London, 1898–
RE	*Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, ed. A. Fr. von Pauly, rev. G. Wissowa *et al.*, Stuttgart and Munich, 1894–1980
SGF	*Satirorum Graecorum Fragmenta*, ed. V. Steffen, 1952, Poznán
SH	*Supplementum Hellenisticum*, edd. H. Lloyd-Jones and P.J. Parsons, Berlin, 1983
TLG	*Thesaurus Linguae Graecae Digital Library*, ed. M.C. Pantelia. Irvine. http://www.tlg.uci.edu (accessed May 15, 2020)
TrGF	*Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta*, edd. B. Snell, R. Kannicht and S.L. Radt, Göttingen 1971–2004

Abbreviations of ancient authors and works follow LSJ. Journal abbreviations follow *L'Année Philologique*. When available, I have used existing English translations of Greek and Latin passages. Any unattributed translations are mine.

Introduction

i. Preliminary considerations

In the last few decades, parody has been at the core of scientific and literary interest. Thanks mostly to the ground-breaking, anthropological studies of Bakhtin and to the research on intertextuality carried out by Genette, parody has stepped out onto the stage of literary studies after centuries of neglecting.[1] In the past, theoretical research on parody has regretfully remained at the edge of scholarly interest for two main reasons: the allegedly disreputable nature of its object of study and the ambiguity of the term itself. On the one hand, scholars have for long overlooked parody due to its imitative and humorous nature. The fundamentally derivative nature of parody has fostered its devaluation, as scholars have downgraded it to a modest (if not contemptible) literary *divertissement*: the parasitic nature of parody, in other words, has blurred the exceptional nature of its innate dialogism.[2] In addition, the distinctively comic nature of parody has undermined its evaluation due to the longstanding aesthetic prejudice against the inferiority of comic genres in comparison to serious ones. On the other hand, the ambiguity of the term itself, triggered by its resemblance to similar imitative styles or genres and rhetorical processes, has elicited long-lasting terminological confusion and has consequently constituted another important impediment toward a satisfactory analysis of parody. Such ambiguity primarily derives from the absence of a lexical codification in antiquity and of a well-defined and unanimous terminology in modern languages, where the lexical family of parody holds several different nuances and embraces a wide set of diverse connotations.[3] For

[1] Cf. Bakhtin (1968; 1981; 1984) and Genette (1997).

[2] Cf. *e.g.* Abastado (1976, 11–12), Hutcheon (1985, 4) and Sangsue (2006, 15–17; 2007, 26). Abastado, in particular, has showed how — from the beginning of the eighteenth century — parody has been harshly undermined by critics, who have considered parodists as parasites unable to produce independent works of literary value and censored their insolence towards their more solemn targets: it goes without saying that the originality of parody, on the contrary, lies precisely in the re-elaboration of its model and not in the creation of new material.

[3] Scholars have often complained about the ambiguity of the word 'parody' and the confusion such ambiguity generates between parody itself, analogue literary styles/genres (such as pastiche, cento, travesty, *spoudogeloion*) and rhetorical practices (such as quotation, allusion, irony), sometimes concluding that an ultimate and encompassing definition is impossible to pursue: cf. *e.g.* Rose (1979, 17) and Dane (1988, 5).

all these reasons and despite the number of parodies that have been produced throughout the centuries and all over the world, it is only in relatively recent times that scholars have appropriately recognised the important role that parody has always played in literature across different cultures. In the last century, parody has gradually become a key field of research due to its epistemological significance and its diachronic and geographical dissemination throughout Western literary and cultural history. Surprisingly, however, the increasing number of modern studies on parody has not led to an appropriate investigation of this practice in ancient Greece. Even if the technique and the generic notion of 'parody' have been frequently exploited to describe the comic aspects of several literary genres (in particular those inherently comic, such as comedy, satyr play, satire etc.), a full investigation of its instances in ancient Greece has not yet been accomplished. In particular, no comprehensive studies have been produced on the specific subject of this work, namely *epic parody*, broadly understood as comic reworkings of epic.[4] Despite their diachronic pervasiveness and their dissemination among different literary genres, such comic reworkings have never been overarchingly and satisfactorily investigated: existing analyses are partial and incoherent, and classical scholarship, as a rule, has employed the expression 'epic parody' to describe a wide range of comic reworkings of epic without giving a valuable and satisfactory account of their multifaceted peculiarities.

ii. Between *parōidia* and 'epic parody'

Before explaining the purpose and structure of this thesis, a premise about the lexical value of the expression 'epic parody' in this work is necessary. The lack of extensive analysis on parody and the consequent ambiguity of its notion has led in turn to a pervasive vagueness around the expression 'epic parody' within the field of classical studies, in which the term has been often used with two different values. On the one hand, the label 'epic parody' has been used to describe any instance of the humorous reshaping of themes, language, characters and other elements of epic. This practice is

[4] The only modern comprehensive investigations have been produced by Degani (1974; 1975; 1982) and, more sketchily, by Olson (1999, 2000): cf. *infra* pp. 11–13. All these works, however, are in fact only introductory notes on the topic.

well attested across literary genres and throughout the entire history of Greek — indeed Western — literature. On the other hand, the expression has been employed to identify a specific poetical *genre* (formally codified in the fifth century BC) characterised by distinctive features. As a consequence, the expression 'epic parody' represents nowadays an ambiguous, confusing label which includes, under its lexical and semantic umbrella, a set of analogous and interconnected, but ultimately different, concepts. This ambiguity derives in great part from the uncertain and much-debated etymology of the Greek word for parody, *parōidia* (παρῳδία), and from its multifaceted meaning. As I will show in the first chapter, the word plausibly originated within the epic sphere and was initially used to identify a poetical practice which consisted in the composition of humorous poems characterised by the employment of epic language and metre. The fact that this practice was formally codified as an out-and-out genre of the same name in the fifth century BC created the first ambiguity over the meaning of the word, which could now be used at the same time to refer to a wide poetic practice or to label a specific genre (which, as I will demonstrate, maintained many of the features of the former). Then, over time, the word progressively lost its exclusive connection with epic and started to be employed in the broader rhetorical sense of 'quotation', 'allusion'.[5] The historical disappearance of the original poetical practice/genre and the lexical shift engendered by this process of semantic enlargement led to the second and continuing ambiguity over the notion of 'parody', as it has made it impossibile for the modern term to reflect adequately the extensive polysemy of the Greek word: in modern languages, the word 'parody' no longer inherently refers to the original Greek epic-related practice/genre, but reflects only its derivative, rhetorical meaning.[6] With some degree of simplification, one can affirm that, given the original connection with epic, the Greek word *parōidia* progressively moved from the original *intrinsic* meaning of 'epic parody' to the broader modern one of 'parody'. As a consequence of the simultaneous presence of these complex layers of meaning,

[5] This expanded meaning also progressively lost the connection with humour, as some late sources seem to suggest: cf. *e.g* Phot. *Lexicon* π 400 (= *Suda* π 715 Adl.). This proves that the sematic range of the word *parōidia* came to be even more extended than the modern one, including also meanings that were unrelated to humour.

[6] This is confirmed by the extremely ambiguous meaning that the word 'parody' holds today: as I have already mentioned, in modern languages the term refers indistinctly to different intertextual practices, to the point that modern scholars have struggled to find a clear codification for its notion and to separate it from literary genres and rhetorical styles equally characterised by such pronounced intertextuality.

scholars have understandably added the adjective 'epic' to their own notion of parody in order to identify all those instances of humorous reworkings of epic that were, in fact, already included in the original value of the word. This usage is based on the modern, purely 'rhetorical' conception of parody, which does not match appropriately the *original*, Greek poetic one. Thus, the 'superficial' translation of the Greek word *parōidia* as 'parody' has elicited long-lasting confusion over the notion of 'epic parody'. It is now perhaps easier to understand the origins of the above-mentioned ambiguity over the expression 'epic parody', which, as I said, can acquire a stricter or a larger connotation in accordance with the value of the word that we intend to use. From a 'stricter' historical perspective, epic parody is to be considered either as an independent poetic practice or as a genre characterised by clear-cut features. The same term, however, can be employed in a wider meaning within whose indistinct frames all comic reworkings of epic models are indistinctly included: such reworkings have always been very common in Greece and are not bound to a specific, codified poetical practice or genre.[7]

iii. An overview of scholarship on Greek epic parody

Despite the pervasiveness of epic parody in Greek literature, its analysis has been partial and incoherent. This is due, on the one hand, to the lack of specific ancient evidence and, on the other, to the fact that scholars have merely given for granted the presence of 'some kind of epic parody' in archaic and classical texts, without feeling the need of fixing its formal and historical boundaries appropriately. This has regretfully prevented a full understanding of the phenomenon, of its inherent relevance and of its incredible diffusion. Few publications are indeed specifically devoted to epic parody, and the most valuable of them are either critical editions and commentaries on parodic poems (mostly out-of-date), or articles that offer only a partial and incoherent perspective on this topic.[8] The first noteworthy study on epic parody dates back to the

[7] It goes without saying that these two values are strictly connected because the genre of epic parody, from a general view, ultimately represents a subset of the rhetorical one.

[8] There are, of course, several publications which investigate ancient parody, but they do not focus strictly on *epic* parody and, as a consequence, cannot be considered for the purpose of this overview. References to these publications can be found in the chapters and in the bibliography of this thesis.

middle of the sixteenth century (1543), when Estienne published a volume which included a list and a sketchy analysis of epic parodies by Hipponax, Hegemon and Matro. This extremely scholarly work offers a general overview of the Greek and Roman parodic material. In 1733, Sallier investigated for the first time the uses of the word παρῳδία in Greece, pinpointing the difference between its specific and vague meanings, and tracing an original but elementary profile of the history of the genre. After that, for at least one century, epic parody almost entirely disappears from the radar.[9] In 1833, Weland makes some basic but significant theoretical and historical considerations on ancient epic parodies and offers a much fuller list of the authors who composed them, adding also an overview of their life and works. In 1855 and 1856 two important publications appeared. The former is a volume by Peltzer: this book, for the first time, combined a theoretical, literary and philological approach to the investigation of epic parody. The latter, a doctoral dissertation by Paessens, is in fact a fuller commentary of the texts collected by Peltzer. Although they suffer from numerous shortcomings, these works are extremely important for the history of scholarship on the subject, since they represent the first philological commentaries on the fragments of epic parody. In addition, they led to a publication of great historical significance for the study of the topic: the *Corpusculum poesis epicae Graecae ludibundae* by P. Brandt, printed in 1888. In this volume, Brandt offers the first satisfactory edition — with critical apparatus, organised *loci similes* and commentary — of the fragments of epic parody: not only was it a detailed commentary of all the fragments of epic parody listed at the time, but it still is the most complete and encompassing critical edition of *all* the fragments of epic parody. Despite its outdatedness, the absence of theoretical considerations and the total lack of a justification for the selection of the fragments analysed, by providing contemporary (and subsequent) scholarship with a useful collection of parodic poems, Brandt's edition represents a crucial step in the studies of epic parody.[10] In the first half of the twentieth century, there is only one publication of real importance for the investigation of epic parody, namely an article by Householder (1944) which includes a lexical

[9] It is worth considering only Flogel's *Geschichte der komischen Literatur* (1784, 332–86): even if it is an encyclopaedic work on laughter and on comic literature, the section on epic parody (pp. 349–86) was surely the fullest and most detailed at his time.
[10] For the philological shortcomings, cf. Olson and Sens (2000, 45–6).

investigation of the occurrences of the term and of its lexical family in Greek. In the second part of the century, the articles by Maas (1949), Lelièvre (1954), Koller (1956) and Pohlmann (1972) tackle the topic of ancient parody, mostly from a lexical point of view. The rebirth of all-encompassing scientific investigations of epic parody in the twentieth century surely rests on the pivotal publications by Degani (1974; 1975; 1982), who in his works on epic parody combines a philological, lexical and historical approach to the genre: though rather sketchy, they have been the basis for all subsequent works. In the last thirty years, contributions have been published by Glei (1992), Beltrametti (1994), Olson and Sens (1999; 2000): in their works, these scholars have investigated the relation between intertextuality and parody, sketching at the same time a general overview of the history of the literary genre. The latest book on the topic dates to 2008: Bertolín Cebrián has formulated a division of the genre into several subgenres, albeit on the basis of extremely unconvincing premises.

iv. Epic: the model of *parōidia*

It is important to spend some preliminary words also on Greek epic, the model of Greek epic parody: since parody is an intrinsically parasitic genre, the nature of the model plays a crucial role in triggering the parodic process and constitutes, therefore, a significant element in its analysis. Epic had an exceptional importance in Greek society and literature. The influence of Homer, Hesiod and the poems of the Epic Cycle on the entire Greek literary tradition cannot be understated: they were permanently quoted and constituted the benchmark for any poetical and, more broadly, cultural discourse.[11] The epic poems have been compared to a 'tribal Encyclopaedia', which permeated all the layers of population in Greek society and was at the very basis of the Greek educational system, a circumstance that undoubtedly amplified the diffusion of the epic poems among the population.[12] If, at first, epic was performed in the *megara*

[11] The epic poems (Homer, Hesiod and the fragments of the Epic Cycle) that we read today are in fact the last redaction of an extremely fluctuant (oral and aural) tradition whose essential elements were fixed, but whose diachronic development is impossible to understand entirely. On this widely discussed and investigated subject, cf. *e.g.* Morris and Powell (1997), Fowler (2004) and Ercolani (2006, 103–23, 183–246). For the notion of 'cultural object' (and of other analogous expressions), cf. *e.g.* Geertz (1973) and Griswold (1986).

[12] In her general studies of the Greek educational system, Cribiore (1996, 243 n. 291) has listed some evidence which proves that students used to learn epic verses by heart and to write down half-verses of

of the aristocratic courts, from the seventh century BC it was constantly performed also in private and civic settings. The plurality of channels through which *epos* spread and its persisting presence in any Greek literary discourse is witness to its continuous relevance throughout Greek society.[13] In accordance with a human inclination — well attested across the world and throughout the centuries — of playing with cultural benchmarks, Greek epic became thus a privileged subject for comic reworkings.

Given these general premises, three specific reasons made epic the most common target of the (innate) parodic disposition. First, its popularity. The knowledge of epic across all the layers of the population not only enlarged the pool of the audience and of the potential 'creators' of parodies — in other words, more people could 'produce' parodies, including at a popular level — but also granted to these poets the opportunity to establish a solid 'contact' with their audience, ensuring that more people could understand the parodic reinterpretations and, consequently, appreciate them. Second, its serious nature and prominent status. Canonical works, like epic, are often considered as such because, on a synchronic perspective, they are the synthesis of the ethical, artistic and cultural standards of a culture and, on a diachronic perspective, they help to 'normalise' these values for future generations. For this reason, they are often the embodiment and the carriers of the notions and values that lie at the heart of each culture. Their serious nature and their standing as cultural, educational and ethical reference points make of them the symbols of the cultural status quo which parody, with the disruptive power of humour and laughter, can play with. Third, epic poems were characterised by distinctive formal traits. This mostly depends, once again, on their popularity and their diffusion: more or less autonomously, people perceived their

Homer as exercise. Cribiore's volume focuses on later Greek and Roman Egypt, but this learning technique had plausibly been used also in previous times. A passage of Aristophanes' *Peace* (cf. *infra* pp. 118–19), in which two young boys make up pastiches of Homeric verses, for instance, is a literary source that supports this hypothesis. Another interesting proof of this common practice is provided by the so-called *Douris Cup*, an Attic red-figure *kylix* painted by Douris around 490–485 BC, which portrays four scenes set in a school: for further information on the vase, cf. *e.g.* Booth (1985) and Sider (2010). The notion of 'tribal encyclopaedia' was formulated by Havelock (1963).

[13] Evidence which proves the awareness of the importance of epic (and in particular of Homer and Hesiod) among the population is vast. The most relevant passages are attested *e.g.* in Herodotus (2.53), where he affirms that Homer and Hesiod gave to the Greeks the knowledge of the divine world; in Plato (*R.* 606e), where he affirms that Homer was the teacher of all Greece; in Isocrates (4.159), where he affirms that Homer was fundamental for the education of young men. A collection of sources and passages has been compiled by Jaeger (1934–47), Verdenius (1970), Marrou (1973), Nicolai (1992), Morgan (1998), Ercolani (2006, 194).

style and features as 'canonical', thus making it recognisable and replicable; in other terms, the popularity of epic contributed to the stereotyping of its connotative traits and its 'replicability' through the riproposition of these constitutive features eased its parodic reworking. On account of this, the fact that the ancient notion of *parōidia* developed in relation to Greek epic is anything but a coincidence: its longstanding and widespread popularity, its well-recognised elevated status and its clichéd nature transformed it into a privileged model for comic alterations, stimulating playful reuses across time, places, and social classes.

A final consideration on the model of epic parody concerns the relative weight given to specific epic poems and scenes. Even if the distinction between parody of a specific work (the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*) and parody of an entire literary genre (epic) is blurred — as the specific works are the expressions of the literary trend itself — the evidence suggests that the *Odyssey* played in proportion a more important role than the *Iliad* or Hesiodic poetry.[14] Not only, as I will show, does the character of Odysseus recur more frequently in caricatural depictions, but also a larger number of parodies — at least in the archaic and classical age — seem to take the *Odyssey*, rather than the other poems, as model. This is surely due to the structure of the poem itself and to the presence in this poem of very peculiar and iconic characters (such as Polyphemus and the Sirens). Since they were certainly stuck in the memory of the audience, it was easier for the parodist to play with them, thus making sure that the audience could grasp the underlying epic model. The analysis of the sources also suggests that epic parody chose the most popular sections and episodes from the epic poems as its targets: the comic allusion to them was probably easier to understand for the audience and, therefore, more successful.[15] In other terms, epic parody selected its model not only

[14] This distinction recalls the difference between *direktes* and *indirektes Paroedieren* already formulated by Dietze (1968, 27): the former targets a specific work, the latter an entire literary trend. On this point, cf. also Dentith (2000, 7). For the reasons why the *Odyssey* was more employed than the *Iliad*, cf. *e.g.* Revermann (2013, 115). The widespread reception of Odysseus and his tales in subsequent literature has been much investigated: cf. *e.g.* Schmidt (1888), Stanford (1949), Phillips (1959), Mastromarco (1998), Casolari (2003), Montiglio (2011). Another character who was often in the spotlight of comic reintepretations is Heracles, who appears in some humorous poems of Hipponax and Archilochus, as well as in several comedies (cf. *e.g.* Tosetti 2018). Just like the adventures of Odysseus, Heracles' Labours were intensively exploited for comic purposes due to their popularity and 'exotic' nature. However, we have no certain evidence of the use of the Heracles' saga in the extant fragments of classical epic parody.

[15] A demonstration of this circumstance is represented by the large use of the structure of the epic *incipit* in parodic poems. Since the incipit is the part of a poem which is easier to memorise, and those of the

on a ‘macroscopic’, but also on a ‘microscopic’ level, leveraging not only on the most famous *genre* of antiquity (epic) – and on the most famous poems of the genre (in particular the *Odyssey*) – but also on its most celebrated *scenes*.

v. The purpose and structure of this thesis

The widespread diffusion of comic reworkings of epic in Greek literature, the lack of studies of this complicated phenomenon and the shortage of satisfactory and comprehensive enquiries on Greek epic parody has prompted me to undertake this research. In order to avoid any lexical and semantic misunderstanding, I emphasise that, in light of what I have already showed in the second section of this introduction, the purpose of this thesis is the analysis of the classical *genre* of epic parody from a literary and historical perspective. As I have already explained, this genre originated from a poetical practice that existed from the very beginning of Greek literary history, but was formally codified as an out-and-out genre only in the fifth century BC. Although my analysis focuses primarily on this codified form of epic parody, I will also tackle earlier and contemporary ‘extended’ forms of epic parody: these poems will contribute to the contextualisation of the main topic on a wider historical and literary perspective. The analysis will be articulated in five chapters. In the first chapter, I will consider the ambiguous meaning that the ancient Greek word *parōidia*. As I will point out, the sources suggest that the term was originally employed to identify a comic hexametric practice which dates back to the beginning of Greek literature before finding its formalisation in a genre in the fifth century BC. I will consequently move to the identification of the corpus of this genre: this will constitute the starting point for the following chapters, which are devoted to the analysis of the most important features of Greek epic parody and to the tracking of these features in earlier and contemporary genres. The second chapter examines the numerous and diverse comic techniques attested in Greek epic parody. I will first show that Greeks were aware of the inherent connection between epic parody and humour; subsequently, I will analyse the different typologies of intertextual plays attested in classical epic

Iliad and of the *Odyssey* were surely very well known, parodists — as I will show in the subsequent chapters — frequently reshaped them in their compositions.

parody and in its contemporary and earlier analogues. The third chapter explores the popular elements of epic parody, which are reflected in several popular features attested in the extant poems. The fourth chapter investigates the metre of epic parody: even if epic parody was chiefly composed in the metre of epic, namely the hexameter, evidence suggests that parodists used to mix this metre with *iamboi* to produce comic outcomes. The fifth chapter is devoted to the criticism that inherently characterises parody. While, on the one hand, this criticism seems to target the model of parody — epic language and tradition — for its outdateness and repetivitiveness, on the other hand, it seems to target also contemporary individuals and professional categories. The deep analysis of the complex notion of *parōidia* and the study of the most important features of the fifth-century genre of epic parody will prove its literary value in antiquity.

Chapter 1
The Genre of Epic Parody and its Corpus

1.1 Introduction

As I have already indicated in the introduction, the diachronic lexical development of the word *parōidia* has created long-lasting ambiguities in the interpretation of epic parody. This chapter, therefore, attempts to clarify the etymology, the notion and the origins of this word from a historical perspective in order to pinpoint its different usages from the archaic to the classical period; it will also identify the corpus which will constitute the basis for the study of Greek epic parody. More specifically, I will begin by investigating the etymology and the meaning of the term *parōidia*. I will show how this word was already used in antiquity with a double connotation connected with epic tradition and performance, as it identified both a specific poetical practice attested since the beginning of Greek literature and, at the same time, its formal 'consolidation' in an out-and-out genre in the fifth century BC.[1] I will then move to the identification of the set of texts whose features will constitute the basis and the touchstone for the literary analysis of epic parody in subsequent chapters. In the last section, I will investigate the evidence on *parōidia* afforded by stone inscriptions: such evidence provides us with valuable insights into the institutional performative setting of the poetical genre.

1.2 Lexical considerations

From an etymological point of view, the word παρῳδία is composed of two distinct elements: the noun ᾠδή and the preposition παρά. The etymology of ᾠδή is certain:

[1] The analysis of the corpus of archaic and classical *parōidiai* cannot rely on any explicit contemporary insight concerning their beginnings due to the lack of indisputable ancient sources: as a consequence, my hypotheses on their origins are necessarily based on texts that date to a period which, as I will show, follows the appearance of the first parodies, *i.e.* from the fourth century BC onwards: the notion of the word, therefore, could have already begun to change at that time. For this reason, the following conclusions will be perforce tainted by some degree of speculation.

the word derives from the verb ἀείδω, which originally means 'to sing'.[2] This meaning progressively weakened and eventually lost its musical connotation in favour of a more generic and less musically marked one.[3] By contrast, the correct meaning of παρά in the word has been long debated. According to LSJ (*s.v.* G I–IV), in compound words παρά displays four different meanings which represent variations of the prototypical notion of 'nearby', 'beside'.[4] In their analysis of the etymology and of the meaning of παρά in the word παρῳδία, scholars have therefore offered different interpretations of this notion, thus reaching different conclusions that can be broadly classified in two groups.[5] The first interpretation dates back to Scaliger (1561, 113–14), who translated the preposition as 'beside' and interpreted it in performative terms. Scaliger argues that παρῳδίαι were originally funny poems employed to space out the performance of rhapsodies and thus took place *beside* them: in other words, παρῳδίαι were comic poems performed παρά ('beside') other ᾠδαί ('rhapsodies', ῥαψ-ῳδίαι, *i.e.* more famous epic poems, which remained the main element of the show).[6] This interpretation has been incorrectly taken to extremes by Koller (1956) and Glei (2000), who have attempted to strengthen the relationship between parody and rhapsody from a terminological point of view: according to Koller, *parōidia* would derive from a

[2] This is confirmed also by its compounds, which are distinctly and universally related to the musical sphere up to the fourth century BC. A detailed analysis of the different compounds of -ῳδή/-ῳδία has been formulated by Pöhlmann (1972, 149-50), who has stressed their original use in the musical field. Likewise, some of the metaphorical uses of the word prove its original musical connotation, as the analysis of some of its derivative verbs, such as ἐπαείδω/ἐπαοιδέω, καταείδω (κατᾴδω) and συναείδω, demonstrates: ἐπαείδω/ἐπαοιδέω can mean 'to use charms or incantation' (cf. Pl. *Tht*. 157, LSJ *s.v.* 2) which are produced by singing enchantments (cf. Pl. *Phd*. 114d, ἐπῳδή/ἐπαοιδή/ἐπῳδός/ἐπαοιδός); the verb καταείδω (κατᾴδω) identifies an incantation obtained through song (cf. *e.g.* Hdt. 7, 191, E. *IT* 1337, LSJ *s.v.* I-II), while the second attested meaning of συναείδω (συνᾴδω), *i.e.* 'to agree with' (cf. *e.g.* Ar. *Lys*. 1088, LSJ *s.v.* 2), surely derives from the metaphor of 'singing together' (cf. *e.g.* the English verb 'to accord').

[3] Cf. Maslov (2009) for a study of the semantics of ἀοιδός and related compounds. The etymology of the word is still debated: cf. *e.g.* Wackernagel (1888, 151–2), Diehl (1940, 86), Frisk (1960–70, 22–3), Pagliaro (1953, 5), *DELG* 21–2, Beekes (1969, 56–7), Harðarson (1993, 163), Sgarbi (1996), *EDG* 23.

[4] The different grammatical functions of παρά have been first analysed by Rau (1870), and, more recently, by Luraghi (2003, 131) and Méndez Dosuna (2012). Like other preverbs, prepositions and adpositions (cf. Greek πρό, περί, πρός), παρά derives from an Indo-European adverbial root *per that denotes proximity: cf. *e.g.* García Ramón (1997). The fact that παρά originally embodied the notion of 'spatial proximity' is confirmed also by modern theories of 'embodied cognition', according to which human intellectual faculties depend on human biological body structures that influence our conceptualisations and organisation of abstract notions on a 'mimetic' basis. For an overview of embodied cognition, cf. *e.g.* Varela, Thompson and Rosch (1991), Lakoff and Johnson (1999), Rowlands (1999), Gallese and Lakoff (2005), Shapiro (2011).

[5] For the morphology and the etymology of the word, cf. *e.g.* Householder (1944) and Degani (1982).

[6] This reading has been accepted for a long time: supporters of this theory are *e.g.* Sallier (1733, 403), Delepierre (1870, 8), Flögel (1784–7, 356, 361), Householder (1944, 8) and Maas (1949, 1684).

stylistic and formal development of performative practice of epic poetry, in line with the important musical changes which took place in the second half of the fifth century BC.[7] By contrast, Glei (2000, 346) draws wrong etymological conclusions by considering the word παρῳδία to be a shortened form of the unattested and reconstructed word *παρὰ-ῥαψῳδεῖν.[8] The second line of interpretation, which was already essentially expressed by Quintilian (*Inst*. 9.2.35) and is today largely accepted, underlines the intrinsic dialogism of parody: this reading takes παρά with the meaning of 'in imitation of', thus implying both the notion of 'resemblance' and 'difference' from the model. According to this reading, παρ-ῳδίαι were 'para-ᾠδαί' (literally 'para-songs'), namely poems which imitated and re-employed earlier material, but not necessarily epic.[9] Although it is impossible to understand which one of the two etymologies is correct because of the lack of conclusive evidence, this analysis interestingly reflects two complementary sides of *parōidia* that will be further considered in this work: the first interpretation emphasises the historical connection between rhapsody and parody which is reported also by literary, epigraphic and historiographical evidence; the second confirms that parody was inherently and strongly characterised by dialogism from the beginning.[10]

1.3 *Parōidia*: between pratice and genre

As I have mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, the lexical family of παρῳδία is very chaotic because it includes a wide range of different meanings which oscillate

[7] Koller argues that 'die παρῳδή kann … nur auf dem Hintergrund der alten Musiké verstanden werden' and suggests translating the preposition παρά with 'against', but his hypothesis has been correctly criticised for its wrong terminological interpretation of the sources: cf. *e.g.* Camerotto (1998, 62).
[8] Glei's hypothesis is hardly acceptable: if we assume a shortened form of παρά + ῥαψῳδία, we should then hypothesise a form like *παραραψῳδία or *παραψῳδία (with haplography) rather than παρῳδία (a term that, moreover, would have improbably lost the whole stem of ῥαψῳδία).
[9] Quintilian (*Inst*. 9.2.35): *Incipit esse quodam modo παρῳδή, quod nomen ductum a canticis ad aliorum (scil. canticorum) similitudinem modulatis abusive etiam in versificationis ac sermonum imitatione servatur*. For another consideration on *parōidia* by Quintilian, cf. *Inst.* 6.3.97. This interpretation was then reiterated in the sixteenth century by Estienne (1572, 560) and accepted *e.g.* by Lelièvre (1954, 66) and Camerotto (1998, 63–4).
[10] The fact that rhapsodes could be at the same time also parodists (and vice versa), as I will show later, also supports this reading. The ῥαψῳδοί were originally called ἀοιδοί: the word παρῳδία, then, might have been built also on this old 'Homeric way' to call the rhapsodes (so, παρὰ-ἀοιδοί = παρὰ-ῥαψῳδοί).

between very specific and very generic values and are difficult to categorise.[11] Despite the lack of ancient definitions and direct evidence on its etymology, conceptualisation and perception in antiquity, the analysis of the sources seems to demonstrate that the Greek word *parōidia* — unlike the modern word 'parody' — initially identified a poetic practice that was specifically connected with rhapsodic performance and consisted in the humorous re-elaboration of epic models. This assertion is based on some speculative, but ultimately likely assumptions that, taken together, seem to provide a satisfactory conclusion. First, the etymology of the word: despite its much-debated value, the verbal element ἀείδω ('to sing') reveals that the word originated in a poetic context which was plausibly linked to rhapsody, as the term in ancient times was mainly used to refer to epic poems. Second, until the first century BC the word is attested *only* in relation to epic contexts, thus suggesting that the original meaning of the word was characterised by a privileged relationship with the epic model.[12] Third, the cultural significance of rhapsody, the incredible influence it exerted over literary practice and its widespread diffusion among all social classes meant it was naturally more exposed than other genres to parodic reworkings. Fourth, the emergence of *parōidia* as a codified and recognised form of epic parody in the fifth century BC strongly suggests that the word must have had some connection with similar practices before. Although we ignore the precise nature of these more ancient compositions, it is likely that these verses were primarily recited next to rhapsodic performances and

[11] The *TLG* database lists twelve attested morphological forms of the semantic family of *parōidia*, but many do not appear before the first century BC and several have their first occurrence in the late twelfth century AD. Numerically speaking, most of the occurrences of *parōidia* go back to the second century AD onwards due to the larger availability of texts from that period and to the process of grammaticalisation that resulted in a more extensive use of the word, even beyond its original meaning. The first two occurrences of the word παρῳδία are also the most debated ones because of their ambiguous interpretation and doubtful textual tradition. The first occurrence appears in the famous passage of the *Odyssey* (22.348–9) in which the rhapsode of Ithaca, Phemius, flatters Odysseus and begs him not to kill him after the hero's *Mnesterophonia*: the verb παραείδειν, in this passage, has generally been considered irrelevant for the research into the word παρῳδία: cf. Householder (1944, 2). The second occurrence, *i.e.* the word παρῳδοῖς in E. *IA* 1146–7, on the other hand, has been widely discussed (cf. *e.g.* Degani 1982, 16–17) and is hardly acceptable for morphological reasons (cf. Page 1934, 183). An important attempt at cataloguing the lexical family of παρῳδία has been made by Householder (1944), who has scrutinised the occurrences of the term παρῳδία and of its cognates and identified three main uses. The reconstruction of Householder has certainly contributed to the categorisation of the meanings of παρῳδία, but it has almost entirely overlooked the historical and semantic development of the word.

[12] We cannot be sure whether the word *parōidia* originally identified *any* reuse of epic diction outside rhapsodic practice or only the *comic* ones; yet, I think that a comic connotation is more probable given the development of a humorous genre with this name.

that they could be delivered both by professional rhapsodes and by amateurs who were reasonably well acquainted with epic diction and could, therefore, make parodies of it.[13] In this context, it is reasonable to assume that the poems could be very multifaceted, ranging from long self-standing poems to shorter compositions, which could be based only on a distinctive epic scene. The existence of humorous hexameter poetry before the fifth century BC is attested also in a passage from Aristotle's *Poetics* (1448b24–1449a6), which adds some historical background to the previous considerations and establishes hexametric comic poetry as a parallel development of serious epic:

> διεσπάσθη δὲ κατὰ τὰ οἰκεῖα ἤθη ἡ ποίησις: οἱ μὲν γὰρ σεμνότεροι τὰς καλὰς ἐμιμοῦντο πράξεις καὶ τὰς τῶν τοιούτων, οἱ δὲ εὐτελέστεροι τὰς τῶν φαύλων, πρῶτον ψόγους ποιοῦντες, ὥσπερ ἕτεροι ὕμνους καὶ ἐγκώμια. τῶν μὲν οὖν πρὸ Ὁμήρου οὐδενὸς ἔχομεν εἰπεῖν τοιοῦτον ποίημα, εἰκὸς δὲ εἶναι πολλούς, ἀπὸ δὲ Ὁμήρου ἀρξαμένοις ἔστιν, οἷον ἐκείνου ὁ Μαργίτης καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα. ἐν οἷς κατὰ τὸ ἁρμόττον καὶ τὸ ἰαμβεῖον ἦλθε μέτρον διὸ καὶ ἰαμβεῖον καλεῖται νῦν, ὅτι ἐν τῷ μέτρῳ τούτῳ ἰάμβιζον ἀλλήλους. καὶ ἐγένοντο τῶν παλαιῶν οἱ μὲν ἡρωικῶν οἱ δὲ ἰάμβων ποιηταί. ὥσπερ δὲ καὶ τὰ σπουδαῖα μάλιστα ποιητὴς Ὅμηρος ἦν (μόνος γὰρ οὐχ ὅτι εὖ ἀλλὰ καὶ μιμήσεις δραματικὰς ἐποίησεν, οὕτως καὶ τὸ τῆς κωμῳδίας σχῆμα πρῶτος ὑπέδειξεν, οὐ ψόγον ἀλλὰ τὸ γελοῖον δραματοποιήσας: ὁ γὰρ Μαργίτης ἀνάλογον ἔχει, ὥσπερ Ἰλιὰς καὶ ἡ Ὀδύσσεια πρὸς τὰς τραγῳδίας, οὕτω καὶ οὗτος πρὸς τὰς κωμῳδίας.
>
> Poetry branched into two, according to its creators' characters: the more serious produced mimesis of noble actions and the actions of noble people, while the more vulgar depicted the actions of the base, in the first place by composing invectives (just as others produced hymns and encomia). Now, we cannot name such an invective by any poet earlier than Homer, though probably many poets produced them; but we can do so from Homer onwards, namely the latter's *Margites* and the like. In these poems, it was aptness which brought the iambic metre too into use — precisely why it is called 'iambic' now, because it was in this metre that they lampooned [*iambizein*] one another. Of the older poets some became composers of epic hexameters, others of iambic lampoons. Just as Homer was the supreme poet of elevated subjects (for he was preeminent not only in quality but also in composing dramatic mimesis), so too he was the first to delineate the forms of comedy, by dramatising not invective but the

[13] The 'popular' nature of these compositions is plausibly one of the reasons behind the scarcity of evidence on these archaic forms of epic parody: their oral and extemporaneous nature obstructed their transmission.

> laughable: thus *Margites* stands in the same relation to comedies as do the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* to tragedies.[14]

Within his (schematically teleological) investigation of the origins of Greek poetry, Aristotle claims that there existed, from the beginning, poems characterised by a derogatory nature which depicted base actions and characters. These poems, which dated back to the oldest stages of Greek literature, had already been lost in his times, but Aristotle regards them as the ancestors of comedy. He sketches a short history of their development which, according to him, began with the *Margites*, a blatant parody of epic language and diction written (mostly) in hexameters.[15] By placing Homer's *Margites* as the first known instance of the archaic tradition that charted the outlines of what was to become comedy, Aristotle not only attests to the existence of a type of 'comic epic' parallel to the serious and more famous strand, but also establishes a strong connection between epic and humour. In addition, this permeation between epic and humour is supported by some passages from the Homeric poems and Hymns and by the existence of several serio-comic poems called *paignia*, poorly attested and hotly debated, traditionally attributed to Homer, which prove that a humorous side of epic thrived alongside the predominant serious one and that the Homeric tradition was not incompatible with humour.[16]

Nonetheless, later evidence suggests that, at least from the fifth century BC, the term fluctuated between this original, wider and epic-related notion to a much more

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[14] All the translations of passages from the *Poetics* are taken from Halliwell (1995).

[15] The *Margites* will be more thoroughly analysed in the next chapters.

[16] Given the late dating of the sources which report these poems, it is impossible to know how old they actually were; even if they had been reworked in a subsequent period, however, their original content was quite archaic: cf. *e.g.* Kirkpatrick and Dunn (2002, 33–5) and West (2003b, 224–37). The *Cercopes* reported a funny incident in the Heracles' saga: two cheeky brothers called Cercopes (literally 'Dick-faces') plagued people and Heracles with their mischievous tricks. Their mother warned them to be aware of a sibylline 'black-ass', which turned out to be Heracles' hairy nether parts: once the hero captured them, he hung them upside down from a shoulder pole. In all likelihood, the *Epikichlides* was an hexametric poem of humorous nature (perhaps of erotic content), while the *Hepta et'aktion* ('Seven against Headland', or *Heptapektos Aix*, *i.e.*'Seven-times-shorn Goat') was a comic reworking of the Theban Cycle. This work is probably also attested with the alternative title *Iamboi*, a name which suggests that the metre of the poem was iambic and that it was characterised by scurrilous and invective nature. As for the *Epithalamia*, it has been suggested some scenes set in the wedding chamber might have had comic undertones. Other poems attributed to Homer were a hilarious reinterpretation of serious epic which casted animal and bird instead of heroes. The most famous one is the *Battle of Frogs and Mice* (*Batrachomyomachia*), which has come down to us in a Hellenistic version. Other poems of this genre are the *Battle of the weasel and the Mice* (cf. *e.g.* Schibli 1983), the *Battle of the Starling*, the *Battle of Spiders*, the *Battle of Cranes*.

specific meaning that identified a distinctive genre emerged in the fifth century BC, likely as a development of the type of practice encompassed by the wider notion.[17] In other words, the original meaning of the word specialised in a derivative, more specific one. This becomes clear through the parallel reading of two sources which provide some clues about its ancient perception. The first is a passage from Aristotle's *Poetics* devoted to the study of the objects of poetic *mimēsis* (Arist. *Po.* 1448a, 1–14):

> Ἐπεὶ δὲ μιμοῦνται οἱ μιμούμενοι πράττοντας, ἀνάγκη δὲ τούτους ἢ σπουδαίους ἢ φαύλους εἶναι (τὰ γὰρ ἤθη σχεδὸν ἀεὶ τούτοις ἀκολουθεῖ μόνοις, κακίᾳ γὰρ καὶ ἀρετῇ τὰ ἤθη διαφέρουσι πάντες), ἤτοι βελτίονας ἢ καθ᾽ ἡμᾶς ἢ χείρονας ἢ καὶ τοιούτους, ὥσπερ οἱ γραφεῖς· Πολύγνωτος μὲν γὰρ κρείττους, Παύσων δὲ χείρους, Διονύσιος δὲ ὁμοίους εἴκαζεν. δῆλον δὲ ὅτι καὶ τῶν λεχθεισῶν ἑκάστη μιμήσεων ἔξει ταύτας τὰς διαφορὰς καὶ ἔσται ἑτέρα τῷ ἕτερα μιμεῖσθαι τοῦτον τὸν τρόπον. καὶ γὰρ ἐν ὀρχήσει καὶ αὐλήσει καὶ περὶ τοὺς λόγους δὲ καὶ τὴν ψιλομετρίαν, οἷον Ὅμηρος μὲν βελτίους, Κλεοφῶν δὲ ὁμοίους, **Ἡγήμων δὲ ὁ Θάσιος ὁ τὰς παρῳδίας ποιήσας πρῶτος καὶ Νικοχάρης ὁ τὴν Δειλιάδα χείρους**·
>
> Since mimetic artists represent people in action, and the latter should be either elevated or base (for characters almost always align with just these types, as it is through vice and virtue that the characters of all men vary), they can represent people better than our normal level, worse than it, or much the same. As too with painters: Polygnotus depicted superior people, Pauson inferior, and Dionysius those like ourselves. Clearly, each of the kinds of mimesis already mentioned will manifest these distinctions, and will differ by representing different objects in the given sense. In dancing too, and in music for aulos and lyre, these variations can occur, as well as in prose writings and metrical works without melody: **for example, Homer represented superior people, Cleophon those like ourselves, Hegemon of Thasos (the first composer of parodies) and Nicochares (author of the *Deiliad*) inferior characters**.

Aristotle maintains that the people represented in a poem fall into the two categories of σπουδαῖοι ('elevated') and φαῦλοι ('base') on the basis of their ἦθος ('character'), whereas the objects of imitation can be classified as better, worse or equal to us. While discussing the literary category of ψιλομετρία ('metrical work without melody'), he quotes four authors as examples of the three objects of imitation he has previously listed: in his view, Homer and Cleophon represent characters who are respectively

[17] An analogous lexical shift can be detected in the word *tragedy* and *comedy*, which originally identifed a specific poetical practice but were later employed in extended meanings (cf. *e.g.* Plu. *Demetr*. 41, Pl. *Phlb.* 50b).

better than us and similar to us; Hegemon of Thasos and Nicochares, on the other hand, represent characters who are worse than us.[18] In this passage, Aristotle employs the word *parōidia* in relation to Hegemon of Thasos, a fifth-century poet that he regards as the first composer of parodies.

The second source is a fragment from the work by the third-century BC scholar Polemon of Ilium (fr. 45 Preller), attested in the fifteenth book of Athenaeus' *Deipnosophistae* (15.698a–699b).[19] In this passage, Polemon lists the most skilled composers of a type of poetry he explicitly identifies with the word *parōidia* and regards Hipponax (not Hegemon) as its father:

> πολλοί τινες παρῳδιῶν ποιηταὶ γεγόνασιν, ὦ ἑταῖρε· ἐνδοξότατος δ᾽ ἦν Εὔβοιος ὁ Πάριος, γενόμενος τοῖς χρόνοις κατὰ Φίλιππον. οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ καὶ Ἀθηναίοις λοιδορησάμενος, καὶ σῴζεται αὐτοῦ τῶν Παρῳδιῶν βιβλία τέσσαρα. μνημονεύει δ᾽ αὐτοῦ Τίμων ἐν τῷ πρώτῳ τῶν Σίλλων. Πολέμων δ᾽ ἐν τῷ δωδεκάτῳ τῶν Πρὸς Τίμαιον περὶ τῶν τὰς παρῳδίας γεγραφότων ἱστορῶν τάδε γράφει· καὶ τὸν Βοιωτὸν δὲ καὶ τὸν Εὔβοιον τοὺς τὰς παρῳδίας γράψαντας λογίους ἂν φήσαιμι διὰ τὸ παίζειν ἀμφιδεξίως καὶ τῶν προγενεστέρων ποιητῶν ὑπερ ἐχειν ἐπιγεγονότας. **εὑρετὴν μὲν οὖν τοῦ γένους Ἱππώνακτα φατέον τὸν ἰαμβοποιόν.** λέγει γὰρ οὗτος ἐν τοῖς ἑξαμέτροις· [fr. 126 Degani]. κέχρηται δὲ καὶ Ἐπίχαρμος ὁ Συρακόσιος ἔν τισι τῶν δραμάτων ἐπ᾽ ὀλίγον καὶ Κρατῖνος ὁ τῆς ἀρχαίας κωμῳδίας ποιητὴς ἐν Εὐνείδαις καὶ τῶν κατ᾽ αὐτὸν Ἠγήμων ὁ Θάσιος, ὃν ἐκάλουν Φακῆν. λέγει γὰρ οὕτως· [fr. 1 Brandt]. πεποίηκε δὲ παρῳδίας καὶ Ἕρμιππος ὁ τῆς ἀρχαίας κωμῳδίας ποιητής. τούτων δὲ πρῶτος εἰσῆλθεν εἰς τοὺς ἀγῶνας τοὺς θυμελικοὺς Ἠγήμων καὶ παρ᾽ Ἀθηναίοις ἐνίκησεν ἄλλαις τε παρῳδίαις καὶ τῇ Γιγαντομαχίᾳ. γέγραφε δὲ καὶ κωμῳδίαν εἰς τὸν ἀρχαῖον τρόπον, ἣν ἐπιγράφουσιν Φιλίνην. ὁ δὲ Εὔβοιος πολλὰ μὲν εἴρηκεν ἐν τοῖς ποιήμασιν χαρίεντα, περὶ μὲν τῆς τῶν βαλανέων μάχης· [SH 411]. περὶ δὲ τοῦ λοιδορουμένου κουρέως τῷ κεραμεῖ τῆς γυναικὸς χάριν· [SH 412]
>
> Many poets have produced parodies, my friend. The most famous was Euboeus of Paros, who was a contemporary of Philip. He is the one who made nasty remarks about the Athenians, and four Books of his Parodies are preserved; Timo mentions him in Book I of his *Silloi*. Polemon in Book 12 of his *Response to Timaeus* (fr. 45 Preller), in the course of his

[18] Aristotle's mention of Homer in this context requires no explanation since the stereotypical characters of his poems are (mostly) heroes. Cleophon was a fourth-century BC Athenian tragedian: the inclusion of his works under the label of ψιλομετρία must be explained by assuming that Aristotle is referring specifically to the dialogic part of his tragedies. Cf. *e.g.* Wright (2016, 188–90).

[19] Polemon's words are quoted by Cynulcus, one of the banqueters of the *Deipnosophistae*. Unfortunately, the context does not provide any information on the school and/or the source(s) that Athenaeus reflects in this passage.

> discussion of the authors of parodies, writes the following: I would refer to both Boeotus and Euboeus, who wrote parodies, as learned men, since they make witty remarks that can be understood several ways and are better than the poets of earlier generations, despite coming later. **It must be acknowledged, of course, that the genre was invented by the iambic poet Hipponax;** for he says in his hexameters: [follows fr. 126 Degani]. Epicharmus of Syracuse also uses parody in some of his plays, to a limited extent, as do the Old Comic poet Cratinus in *Euneidae* and, among his contemporaries, Hegemon of Thasos, who was nicknamed Lentil-Soup. Because he says the following: [follows fr. 1 Brandt]. The Old Comic poet Hermippus also composed parodies. The first of these men to enter competitions onstage was Hegemon, who took the prize in Athens with various parodies, including with his *Gigantomachy*. He is also the author of a comedy in the old style; the title given to it is *Philinê*. Euboeus makes many witty remarks in his poems; about the battle of the bathmen, for example [follows *SH* 411]. And about the barber who called the potter names on account of the woman [follows *SH* 412].[20]

The synoptic reading of these passages suggests a twofold consideration. On the one hand, both authors identify *parōidiai* as compositions in hexameters based on a comic reworking of epic language. Although this is not explicitly spelled out in their texts, it is nevertheless proved by the poems mentioned by both Aristotle and Polemon, all of which shared these features.[21] On the other hand, however, the discrepancy between the two scholars in determining the 'parodic corpus' and the first composer of parodies — Hegemon and Hipponax respectively — suggests that the word *parōidia* could be used to identify interrelated, but ultimately different poetical practices. The authors listed by Polemon, in particular, range from Hegemon, whom we know to have composed and performed *autonomous* parodic poems in theatrical contexts (cf. *infra*), to Cratinus and Epicharmus, whose compositions were not self-standing parodies but parodic 'excerpts' inserted in their plays.[22] By grouping together without clear-cut parameters authors who composed autonomous parodic poems with those who merely inserted parodic passages in works of a different nature, Polemon does not employ the

[20] Text and translation of the *Deipnosophistae* are taken from Olson (2006–12).
[21] These poets and their poems (Hegemon, Hipponax, Cratinus, Hermippus, Epicharmus, Euboeus and Boeotus) will be analysed in the subsequent sections and chapters of this work.
[22] Scholars have claimed that it may refer either to partial hexametric passages in comedies — such as the one postulated for Hermippus fr. 63 or Cratin. fr. 349 — or to non-dramatic epic parodies (such as those composed by Hegemon of Thasos). For the fragment by Hermippus, cf. *e.g.* Rodríguez-Noriega Guillén (2012, 77–8) and Comentale (2017, 36–8), with further bibliography. As for Cratinus, cf. *e.g.* Bianchi (2016). For the mention of Epicharmus, cf. the various (sometimes conflicting) views of Olson (2007), Willi (2008, 176), Revermann (2013, 107) and Tosetti (2018, 517).

term *parōidiai* to distinguish a codified, distinctive poetical genre, but rather uses it to refer to any instance of humorous hexametric re-elaboration of the epic language. In other words, Polemon seems to apply the word *parōidia* with the same wider meaning, which the word must have possessed also before the fifth century BC. He based his own categorisation on the presence of certain features — the use of hexameters, the comic re-writing of epic scenes, the humorous twisting of epic formulas — but not on the notion that these poems could be autonomous and performed in specific settings. His notion of *parōidia* was therefore genre-transcending. This, by the way, explains why Polemon identified Hipponax as the founder of epic parody in Greece: Hipponax did compose epic parodies, but these epic parodies reflected the earlier wider practice and did not share all the features of the genre as codified in the fifth century BC. Aristotle, on the other hand, took *parōidiai* from a more 'institutional' perspective. With this word he identified only a distinctive group of poems whose characteristics derived from the more extensive poetical practice Polemon refers to, but that at his time were perceived as part of an autonomous, distinctive poetical genre characterised by its own performative context and whose 'creator' (*i.e.* the first who entered epic parodies in autonomous contexts) was Hegemon of Thasos.[23] As I will show in the next sections, the existence of this genre is proved by the analysis of the evidence on Hegemon of Thasos and by archaeological evidence. In the fifth century BC, *parōidiai* were 'institutionalised' in civic poetic contests and settings: this surely represented an important step in the perception of *parōidia* as an autonomous genre, rather than as a more fluid poetical practice. From the fifth century BC onwards, the word *parōidia* was employed to identify, therefore, not only the broad, generic hexametric reuse of epic language in different context, but also a specific genre with its own distinctive features and performative settings. If this hypothesis is correct, it is plausible that the

[23] This hypothesis is confirmed also by the fact that the context of the passage of Aristotle focuses on the analysis of the poetic genres which emerged in the fifth century BC and were set in a purely theatrical context: in this context any mention of Hipponax would have clearly been out of place. We have no reasons to believe that Aristotle, out of ignorance, maintained that no comic reworkings of epic parody existed before his times. Moreover, the term *genos* (*i.e.* 'genre') employed by Polemon to identify the poems of Hipponax is to be understood not in the specific value of *poetical genre*, but in that of '*type' of poetical practice* or (even more plausibly) it represents his attempt to backdate the origins of the parodic genre in archaic times, probably for Polemon's interest in spotting the πρῶτος εὑρετής of literary genres: cf. *e.g.* Deichgräber (1952) and Angelucci (2003). The contradiction employed to identify the *prōtos euretēs* of the genre, in other terms, is only apparent and depends on the different criteria employed for its definition.

emergence of this parodic genre created ambiguity around the word *parōidia*, as this word could be used at the same time both in an extended sense (that of poetical practice) and in a narrow one (that of genre), thus having already a double meaning before the semantic bleaching that separated the word from its epic connection. The understanding of this point is essential for the sake of the arguments that follow, as it clears lexical confusion about the identification of the genre of *parōidia* and, consequently, about the definition of its corpus that will constitute the heart of my investigation in the fifth section of this chapter.

1.4 A cognitive approach to the categorisation of *parōidia*

As I have just shown, it is probable that the word *parōidia* could be employed with different meanings in the fifth century BC: it could refer both to a genre-transcending comic reuse of epic models and to a literary genre with distinctive features. As many scholars have highlighted in the last few decades, literary genres are category concepts that represent groups of compositions based on mental classifications.[24] Unlike the categorisation of concrete entities, that of literary genres deals with 'poetic products' which, by their very nature, are open to a large number of different interpretations. As a consequence, to delineate literary genres ultimately means to gather a cluster of poems in accordance to an arbitrary series of features that we consider to be somehow 'typical' of a specific genre. While some genres of Greek literature are easier to define due to their very definite features or because we have ancient theorisations about them, the case of epic parody is different, and we need new, different hermeneutical tools. The approach to categorisation that I employ here is a cognitive one. Before cognitive studies, the mainstream theoretical approach to categorisation was the so-called 'classical theory', an approach based on the enumeration of necessary and sufficient conditions for membership to a category.[25] It has been correctly argued, however, that this theory does not accurately reflect that way in which the human mind categorises

[24] In the case of ancient Greece, these categorisations obviously rely on social, performative, metrical and ritual practices. For the theory of ancient Greek poetic genres cf. *e.g.* Harvey (1955), Rossi (1971), Calame (1974; 1998), Gentili (1984), Fowler (1987), Käppel (1992), Bartol (1993), Ford (2002), Cingano (2003), Fantuzzi and Hunter (2004, 1–41), Zimmermann (2008), Rotstein (2010). For further bibliography cf. Rotstein (2010, 3 n.1)

[25] For an overview of the history of categorisation, cf. Lakoff (1987, XI–XVII; 1999) and Labov (2004).

entities, as people tend to identify members of categories on the basis of pragmatic parameters (such as best examples) and not necessarily in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions. In particular, this theory hardly befits abstract material such as historical and cultural data: we cannot usefully apply this kind of 'classical' categorisation to literary entities which do not fit in such rigid and narrow schemas.[26] As a consequence, if we were to apply this theory to the notion of epic parody, the classification would turn out to be very inadequate.[27] The analysis of the passage by Aristotle has revealed that in Greece there was a specific genre called *parōidia* with clear-cut peculiarities. However, as demonstrated by the use of the word in Polemon, ancient Greeks perceived the notion of *parōidia* also in a broader sense. If we follow the classical theory, we find ourselves at a crossroads: if we consider as *parōidia* only the texts which agree with the more institutional meaning of the word — that of Aristotle — we would narrow excessively the scope of the research, excluding from the category some texts that were certainly perceived, even if to a different extent, as 'parodic'. By contrast, if we select its other value — that of Polemon — we would find difficult to bring to system an heterogeneous group of texts which share only certain features. Moreover, to complicate the picture further, there is a third way to intend parody, namely any re-formulation (either comic or not) of a given hypotext, not necessarily epic. Given the inaccuracy of such methodology for our field of research, the investigation of the concept needs more appropriate tools, such as those which derive from modern cognitive approaches: 'family resemblance', 'prototype', 'salient features' and 'chunking'.[28]

Let us begin with the notion of *family resemblance*: given a set of entities, although one cannot isolate one single essential feature which is common to all of them, it is possible to find some overlapping and criss-crossing similarities which allow us to group them into a single category.[29] This concept fits very well with the categorisation of literary genres, as we are then able to include in a defined 'family' a

[26] Cf. the notion of 'family resemblance' described in the next page. Cf. Rosch (1978, 35).
[27] For a similar analysis in relation to the iambic genre, cf. Rotstein (2010, 6–7).
[28] The same notions are listed by Rotstein (2010, 8), with the addition of those of 'script' and 'embodiment': though potentially useful for the investigation of ancient epic parody, I will not consider them in my analysis. Cf. *e.g.* Turner (1991, 150).
[29] The concept of family resemblance has been first formulated by Wittgenstein (*PI* 66–77) in his examination of 'games'. Fishelov (1993, 53–83) has first proposed to apply this notion to genre theory.

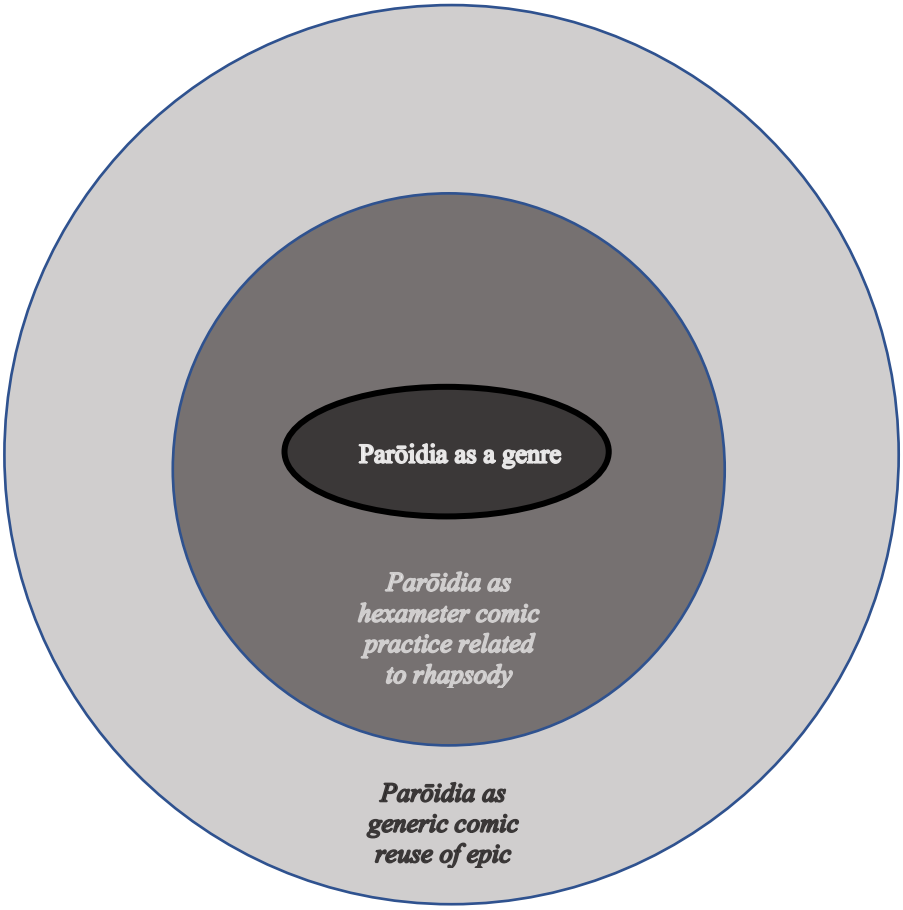
set of intrinsically distinct components that share some distinctive characteristics, even if not all members share the same characteristics with all other members.[30] On the basis of the ancient occurrences of the word, we know that *parōidia* had several different but interconnected meanings. If we apply the model of *family resemblance* to the notion of *parōidia*, it is possible to organise its meanings in a more appropriate way: in fact, considering literary *parōidia* as a 'complex family', we can retrace in the large group distinct subordinate levels of internal specification.[31] The concept of family resemblance becomes even more valuable and convincing when it is connected with the principles of the so-called *prototype theory*.[32] According to this theory, in the process of basic categorisation, human beings tend to identify a set of prototypes that work as cognitively exemplary members of a given category. As a consequence, this notion demonstrates that the entities that belong to a certain category partake of it in different degrees, and that categories frequently display a radial structure 'with central good examples, secondary poorer examples and peripheral examples'.[33] If we combine the notion of family resemblance with that of prototype theory, we end up with a much more satisfactory description of the notion of *parōidia*, which shows different degrees of closeness to the 'prototype' of parody. Prototype theory is closely connected with (and ultimately depends on) the concept of *salient features*, *i.e.* the characteristics that identify a specific category and qualify the 'degree of participation' of a certain type to the category itself.[34] In the field of epic parody, the salient features that mostly characterise the genre of *parōidia* since its beginnings are its linguistic and thematic relation with the epic tradition. If we want to include the parameter of salient features in a visual representation of epic parodic literature, we must conclude that the more internal the circle is, the larger the number of salient features it holds. From a visual perspective, the 'core' circle represents the prototypical idea of the family of *parōidia*

[30] For the usefulness of this notion to analyse types that are not rigidly characterised by a given set of common features, cf. Fowler (1982, 38).
[31] Similar applications of the concept of family resemblance to literary genres are those of *e.g.* Käppel (1992), Rutherford (2001), Furley and Bremer (2001).
[32] The notion of 'prototype theory' has been first expressed by Rosch (1978).
[33] Cf. *e.g.* Rosch (1973a; 1973b; 1978), Lakoff (1987) and Stockwell (2002, 29). Classical studies are not completely new to this concept: cf. *e.g.* the works by Stockwell (2002) and Fishelov (1995) in relation to epic poetry and Homer as prototype of the genre, and Rotstein (2007), in relation to iambic poetry and Archilochus as prototype of the genre.
[34] Cf Rotstein (2007) for an application of the concept to the study of the *iambos*.

displaying the highest number of illustrative features of the genre, while in the peripheral areas the number of these features decreases. Strictly connected with the idea of prototype is also the concept of *chunking*, which consists in the process of unconscious reduction that humans mentally undertake to simplify the categorisation of reality.[35] 'Chunking' influences, to different extents, each literary genre and involves the process of cutting down the number of features associated with the genre itself. Given the original characteristics of epic parody, the word *parōidia* and its semantic family are used progressively in relation to the independent presence of some of its salient features, thus indicating just something comic (but not necessarily hexametric and with an epic hypotext) or something connected with an epic hypotext, but without comic values. The progressive 'simplification' of these salient features led to an even more extended use of the word.

The present categorisation leads to the scheme reported in the next page, which represents a visual attempt to a cognitive categorisation of the Greek notion of *parōidia*. In the inner circle, we find *parōidia* as a genre, *i.e.* that type of parody which was recognised to be a formally constituted literary genre. In the larger circle, we find *parōidia* in its (probable) original meaning of a broader hexametric practice. The compositions that belong to this circle actually share all the formal features of the inner one, with the exception of a formal, 'institutionalised' aknowledgment. In the external circle, we find *parōidia* as comic reformulation of epic models without any metrical and/or performative feature. Outside this circle, one may consider all the more extended, rhetorical, derivative uses of *parōidia* which are no longer related at all with the original poetical practice.

[35] Cf. D'Andrade (1995). A clear example for this process is *e.g.* the concept of 'comic' or 'tragic'.



Parōidia in a rhetorical, extended meaning (allusion)

1.5 The corpus of the genre of classical epic parody

As I have established in the previous sections, the sources demonstrate that the term *parōidia* could be used to identify a specific genre that arose in the fifth century BC and was performed in dedicated institutional settings. In this section, I will list and introduce the extant corpus of authors belonging to this genre: these poems will constitute the starting point for the literary analysis of Greek epic parody carried out in the subsequent chapters. The selection depends on the fact that, as far we know, the poets included composed autonomous hexameter poems that mock the epic model and that are identified by the sources as *parōidiai*.[36] Before beginning to examine them, a preliminary consideration is necessary. The corpus that I will investigate does not reflect perfectly the one conveyed by Brandt in his edition of epic parodies, which still represents the most all-encompassing collection of parodic poems. This is due the fact that this thesis will focus on the poems of *classical* epic parody, *i.e.* the poems that were composed in the fifth and fourth century BC. In addition, I will exclude from the present analysis some poems included by Brandt in his edition that are not surely parodic. I will not consider, therefore, the *Batrachomyomachia*, which is probably to be dated to the Hellenistic period, four *adespota*, probably composed by Dio Chrysostom (frr. VIIIa, VIIIb) and Galen (fr. IX), another unattributed fragment (fr. VI) and four *dubia* (Ia/b, II, III), either not certainly parodic or presumably to be dated to a later period.[37] I will also exclude the *Hedypatheia* by Archestratus of Gela. Since several peculiarities — such as, in particular, the use of hexameters and of epic diction and tropes for the description of a vulgar subject, food — connect it with *parōidia*, this poem has been sometimes inappropriately associated with epic parody. It has been already pointed out, however, that the poem did not belong to this genre, as epic parody

[36] Given the different amount of scholarship that has been produced on each individual parodic poet, my analysis of the evidence in this section will be 'unbalanced': I will devote less attention to those that have been already adequately investigated (namely Matro of Pitane), while I will provide a fuller account of those that require further investigations (namely Hegemon of Thasos). Only a few studies of Hegemon have been produced so far, while a commentary on Matro has been published by Olson and Sens (1999). I will then consider Hegemon from a more thorough perspective; as for the other authors, I will delineate their most important features. Their poems will be more fully researched in the following thematic chapters.

[37] Olson and Sens include fr. 2 (= VI Brandt) among the fragments that may belong to Matro's time (or earlier), but nothing actually seems to confirm this. As for the fragment of Galen, cf. Cohon and Lamar Crosby (1940, 255 n. 1).

was not its primary purpose.[38] Another poem that has been associated with epic parody is the so-called *Egyptian Iliad*, a poem attributed to Hipparchus (*SH* 496, 497), which is probably to be dated to Hellenistic times and which survives in only two fragments.[39] Even if the fragments — which reveal gastronomic content — and the name (reported by Athenaeus) suggest that it may have been a parody of the *Iliad*, nothing proves that the original poem was actually a parody.

1.5.1 Hegemon of Thasos: the father of the genre

Hegemon of Thasos is an emblematic exponent of epic parody in Greece.[40] Even if the scarcity of evidence on him precludes an adequate overview of his life and poetical production, what we know about him gives us some clues, albeit indirectly, on classical *parōidia*.[41] The first reference to Hegemon is the passage from Aristotle's *Poetics* (1448a1–14, cf. *supra* p. 24), where Aristotle credits Hegemon with the paternity of the parodic genre. Despite its importance for our knowledge of the notion of *parōidia*, however, this passage reports no actual information about Hegemon's life and works; luckily though, some such clues are preserved in passages from lost works reported in Athenaeus' *Deipnosophistae*. The most crucial among these is the abovementioned fr. 45 Preller (cf. *supra* pp. 25–6) from the work of Polemon. In this passage, Polemon lists Hegemon among τὰς παρῳδίας γεγραφότων ('those who wrote parodies') and provides us with three pieces of information about him. First, he gives us essential information for the chronology of Hegemon, reporting that he lived in the fifth century BC, in the same period (τῶν κατ' αὐτὸν [χρόνον]) of Epicharmus and Cratinus. Second, Polemon says that Hegemon was the first to enter *thymelici* contests ('competitions onstage'), where he won prizes with various parodies and with a poem

[38] Cf. *e.g.* Olson and Sens (2000, XXXV). To his considerations, one may add also that despite the reasonable number of preserved fragments and sources, the poem is called *parōidia* in none of them: this might demonstrate that the poem was not perceived by Greeks as belonging to this genre.
[39] Brandt omitted this poem either by choice or by negligence. Olson and Sens (1999, 11–12) includes it in their short overview of epic parody (1999, 11), but do not consider it certainly parodic.
[40] The poetical figure of Hegemon of Thasos has been investigated, so far, only in some scattered articles (mostly of philological nature) and in commentaries and collections of parodic fragments: for a fuller, more detailed bibliography on Hegemon, cf. Bagordo (2014) and Magnani (2014).
[41] I have reported here only the most important evidence on Hegemon, excluding the passages that are later reworkings of earlier sources. For a detailed discussion of the evidence, cf. Magnani (2014).

called *Gigantomachy.* This piece of information is valuable as it corroborates what we know from Aristotle, namely that Hegemon was regarded as the first poet who took part in institutional parodic contests; it also reveals that the winning poem was based on a subject — the mythological fight for the supremacy of *kosmos* between the Giants and the Olympian Gods — that was regularly performed in rhapsodic performances.[42] Third, the passage reports that Hegemon wrote also a comedy εἰς τὸν ἀρχαῖον τρόπον ('in the old style') called *Philinna*, whose only surviving fragment is reported in another passage of Athenaeus (3.108c).[43] This proves that Hegemon was both a comedian and a parodist, thus suggesting a close relationship between these two genres in the fifth century BC. This is corroborated also by another passage from Athenaeus (1.5a–b), which reports that Hegemon was reckoned among known representatives of the Old Comedy:

> ὅτι δείπνων ἀναγραφὰς πεποίηνται ἄλλοι τε καὶ Τιμαχίδας ὁ Ῥόδιος δι' ἐπῶν ἐν ἕνδεκα βιβλίοις ἢ καὶ πλείοσι καὶ Νουμήνιος <ὁ> Ἡρακλεώτης, ὁ Διεύχους τοῦ ἰατροῦ μαθητής, καὶ Ματρέας ὁ Πιταναῖος ὁ παρῳδὸς καὶ Ἡγήμων ὁ Θάσιος ὁ ἐπικληθεὶς Φακῆ, ὃν τῇ ἀρχαίᾳ κωμῳδίᾳ τινὲς ἐντάττουσιν.
>
> Others produced descriptions of dinners: Timachidas of Rhodes in 11 books of epic verse or even more; Numenius of Heracleia, the student of the physician Dieuches; the parodist Matreas of Pitane; and Hegemon of Thasos, nicknamed Lentil Soup, whom some include among the authors of Old Comedy.[44]

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[42] The *Gigantomachy* was a popular theme in literature and iconography: cf. *e.g.* Vian (1951, 13), Davies (1989, 14) and Debiasi (2004, 71–4, 2005). This is the only surviving title for any of Hegemon's works. The poem — perhaps his most popular work — was ostensibly a humorous narration of the myth, but we cannot exclude that it was a rhapsodic poem instead: if so, Hegemon would have been both a parodist and a rhapsode.

[43] For some considerations on the expression εἰς τὸν ἀρχαῖον τρόπον ('in the old style'), cf. Ornaghi (2004a, 463). Cf. Bagordo (2014) for the latest and most detailed commentary on the fragment of the play.

[44] This passage contains also a reference to a lost and entirely unknown 'gastronomic' work by Hegemon, which makes him the first author of poems with a culinary subject: this piece of evidence reinforces the close connection between parody, humour and food (cf. pp. 134–40). For an analysis of the passage of Athenaeus' *Epitome*, cf. Degani (2010) and Olson and Sens (2000a, XXXIII). The context of the reference suggests that the metre of the gastronomic work was the hexameter, as all the poets mentioned in this passage alongside Hegemon wrote hexametric poems. That the poem was parodic is suggested by the nature of Hegemon's other works and by the fact that he is quoted after Matro of Pitane (here erroneously called 'Matreas', cf. Olson and Sens 1999, 3), the most important author of gastronomic epic parody. As for Timachidas of Rhodes and Numenius of Heraclea cf. *e.g.* Dalby (2003, 234, 328). Hegemon's familiarity with culinary themes, by the way, is proved also by the two surviving verses of his *Philinna*.

Another remarkable source on Hegemon's life is a fragment of the treatise *On Old Comedy* (fr. 44 Giordano *ap.* Ath. 9.406e–407c) by the philosopher Chamaeleon:

> Χαμαιλέων ὁ Ποντικὸς ἐν ἕκτῳ Περὶ τῆς Ἀρχαίας Κωμῳδίας· Ἡγήμων ὁ Θάσιος <ὁ> τὰς Παρῳδίας γράψας Φακῆ ἐπεκαλεῖτο καὶ ἐποίησεν ἔν τινι τῶν Παρῳδιῶν· [fr. 1. 17–21 Brandt]. εἰσῆλθε δέ ποτε καὶ εἰς τὸ θέατρον διδάσκων κωμῳδίαν λίθων ἔχων πλῆρες τὸ ἱμάτιον, οὓς βάλλων εἰς τὴν ὀρχήστραν διαπορεῖν ἐποίησε τοὺς θεατάς. καὶ ὀλίγον διαλιπὼν εἶπε·
>
> λίθοι μὲν οἵδε· βαλλέτω δ᾽ εἴ τις θέλει·
> ἀγαθὸν δὲ κἀν χειμῶνι κἀν θέρει Φακῆ.
>
> εὐδοκίμει δ᾽ ὁ ἀνὴρ μάλιστα ἐν ταῖς παρῳδίαις καὶ περιβόητος ἦν λέγων τὰ ἔπη πανούργως καὶ ὑποκριτικῶς, καὶ διὰ ταῦτα σφόδρα παρὰ τοῖς Ἀθηναίοις εὐδοκίμει. ἐν δὲ τῇ Γιγαντομαχίᾳ οὕτω σφόδρα τοὺς Ἀθηναίους ἐκήλησεν, ὡς ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ πλεῖστα αὐτοὺς γελάσαι, καίτοι ἀγγελθέντων αὐτοῖς ἐν τῷ θεάτρῳ τῶν γενομένων περὶ Σικελίαν ἀτυχημάτων. bοὐδεὶς ἀπέστη καίτοι σχεδὸν πᾶσι τῶν οἰκείων ἀπολωλότων. ἔκλαιον οὖν ἐγκαλυψάμενοι, οὐκ ἀνέστησαν δ᾽, ἵνα μὴ γένωνται διαφανεῖς τοῖς ἀπὸ τῶν ἄλλων πόλεων θεωροῦσιν ἀχθόμενοι τῇ συμφορᾷ· διέμειναν δ᾽ ἀκροώμενοι καίτοι καὶ αὐτοῦ τοῦ Ἡγήμονος, ὡς ἤκουσε, σιωπᾶν διεγνωκότος. καθ᾽ ὃν δὲ χρόνον θαλασσοκρατοῦντες Ἀθηναῖοι ἀνῆγον εἰς ἄστυ τὰς νησιωτικὰς δίκας, γραψάμενός τις καὶ τὸν Ἡγήμονα δίκην ἤγαγεν εἰς τὰς Ἀθήνας. ὁ δὲ παραγενόμενος καὶ συναγαγὼν τοὺς περὶ τὸν Διόνυσον τεχνίτας προσῆλθε μετ᾽αὐτῶν Ἀλκιβιάδῃ βοηθεῖν ἀξιῶν. ὁ δὲ θαρρεῖν παρακελευσάμενος εἰπών τε πᾶσιν ἔπεσθαι ἦκεν εἰς τὸ Μητρῷον, ὅπου τῶν δικῶν ἦσαν αἱ γραφαί, καὶ βρέξας τὸν δάκτυλον ἐκ τοῦ στόματος διήλειψε τὴν δίκην τοῦ Ἡγήμονος. ἀγανακτοῦντες δ᾽ ὅ τε γραμματεὺς καὶ ὁ ἄρχων τὰς ἡσυχίας ἤγαγον δι᾽ Ἀλκιβιάδην, φυγόντος δι᾽ εὐλάβειαν καὶ τοῦ τὴν δίκην γραψαμένου.
>
> Chamaeleon of Pontus in Book VI of *On Old Comedy*: Hegemon of Thasos, the author of the Parodies, was nicknamed Lentil-Soup and wrote in one of his *Parodies*: [Hegem. fr. 1. 17–21 Brandt]. Once when he was staging a comedy, he entered the Theater with his robe full of stones, and puzzled the audience by tossing them into the orchestra. But a few minutes later he said:
>
> Here are some stones, and anyone who likes can throw them.
> But Lentil-Soup is a fine dish in winter and summer alike.
>
> He was particularly admired for his parodies and had a reputation for reciting his poems stylishly, like an actor; as a consequence, the Athenians had an extremely high opinion of him. They were so captivated by his *Gigantomachy* that they laughed a great deal that day, even though the

> disasters that had occurred in Sicily were announced to them in the Theatre. No one got up to leave, despite the fact that almost everyone had lost family-members. So they covered their faces and cried, but did not leave their seats, because they did not want it to be obvious to the spectators from the other cities that they were upset about what had happened. Instead, they stayed there and listened to the recital, even though Hegemon himself had decided not to perform when he heard the news. The Athenians were the masters of the sea in this period and required all legal cases involving islanders to be heard in their city. Someone filed a suit against Hegemon and summoned him to Athens, and when he got there, he gathered everyone involved in the theatre business and went with them to see Alcibiades, in the expectation that he could be of assistance. Alcibiades encouraged him to keep his spirits up; told them all to follow him; went to the *Metroon*, where the records having to do with lawsuits were kept; and licked his finger and erased Hegemon's trial from the list. The secretary and the magistrate in charge were unhappy about this, but kept quiet, because it was Alcibiades and because the man who brought the suit had discreetly disappeared.

The passage relates two significant anecdotes on Hegemon's life.[45] According to the first, the news of the disastrous conclusion of the Sicilian Expedition (415–13 BC) reached Athens during the performance of Hegemon's *Gigantomachy*, but the audience, despite the loss of many dear ones, kept following the play: this attests to Hegemon's popularity and the high esteem in which the Athenians held his parodies.[46] In the second anecdote, Chamaeleon reports that Hegemon, summoned to Athens on account of a vague accusation, escaped the process thanks to Alcibiades' assistance.[47] The episode, whether true or not, demonstrates that Hegemon's standing as author of parodies was prominent enough to lead to believe that he could have a personal connection with the top Athenian leaders and gain their favour: this encourages to

[45] The source, however, is not entirely reliable and the episodes reported must be treated with some degree of scepticism: cf. *e.g.* Magnani (2014). This passage, in which we find the expression εἰσῆλθε δέ ποτε καὶ εἰς τὸ θέατρον διδάσκων κωμῳδίαν ('Once when he was staging a comedy'), confirms that Hegemon composed comedies (cf. *supra* p. 36).

[46] This is explicitly reported in the passage: εὐδοκίμει δ' ὁ ἀνὴρ μάλιστα ἐν ταῖς παρῳδίαις καὶ περιβόητος ἦν λέγων τὰ ἔπη πανούργως καὶ ὑποκριτικῶς καὶ διὰ ταῦτα σφόδρα παρὰ τοῖς Ἀθηναίοις εὐδοκίμει. For the interpretation of the adverb ὑποκριτικῶς ('like an actor') in the passage, cf. Panomitros (2003). Additional proofs of Hegemon's popularity are that fact that, according to the passage of Polemon previously mentioned, he won several times in poetic contests with his parodies and his nickname Φακῆ ('lentil soup'), frequently attested in the sources, which has been variously interpreted by scholars: whatever the origins of the nickname, the fact that Hegemon was able to interact with the public through a 'stage name' indirectly testifies to his popularity.

[47] This (dubious) relationship — attested nowhere else — has been variously explained: cf. *e.g.* Magnani (2014) for an overview of the hypotheses formulated so far.

regard him as a member of fifth-century Athenian 'intellectual élite' and consequently to believe that epic parody was kept in high esteem also by the most exclusive 'intellectual circles' of the *polis*. Epic parodies, in other words, seem to have found their 'literary' legitimacy in the fifth century BC among other admired genres, and Hegemon of Thasos is likely to have contributed in a crucial way to this process of 'ennoblement', which is confirmed by the inclusion of epic parodies in formally institutionalised contests. The last important source on Hegemon is the explanation of the proverb καὶ τὸ Πέρδικος σκέλος ('and the leg of Perdix', *CPG* 1.406, 8): Hegemon of Thasos allegedly inserted the expression in his parodies when he could not come up with the words:

> Ἐν παντὶ μύθῳ καὶ τὸ Πέρδικος σκέλος: ἐπὶ τῶν κατὰ ἀπορίαν λόγου παρελκούσῃ χρωμένων τῇ προσθήκῃ. Πέρδιξ γὰρ ἦν τις Ἀθήνησι χωλὸς κάπηλος, οὗ διαβεβοημένου Ἡγήμων ὁ Θάσιος ὁπότε παρῳδῶν ἀπορήσειε, προσετίθει, Καὶ τὸ Πέρδικος σκέλος.
>
> In every talk 'and the leg of Perdix (Partridge)': with respect to those who use an additional supplement when they do not come up with the words. For Perdix was a lame tavern keeper; after this man had become well known Hegemon of Thasos: when he was short of parodies, he added 'and the leg of Perdix!'

This anecdote is notable for two reasons.[48] First, the metrical form of the expression (which cannot fit a hexameter) testifies to the practice of mixing different metres: as I will show later (cf. ch. 4), the sudden and unexpected substitution of the most elevated metre (the hexameter) with less elevated ones (a iambic one, in this case) resulted in hilarious outcomes.[49] Second, it is explicit (though indirect) testimony of the impromptu nature of his performances, in line with contemporary rhapsodic ones.[50]

Out of the parodic works of Hegemon of Thasos, only one fragment survives (fr. 1 Br.).[51] Even if we know nothing of its performative context, the twenty-one

[48] These reasons will be better explained in the next chapters: cf. *infra* pp. 147–8 and 165.
[49] The hexametric context of the expression is highly probable in the light of the phrase ὁπότε παρῳδῶν ἀπορήσειε ('when he was short of parodies'): given that Hegemon's parodies were hexametric, there is no reason to believe that the context was of a different metrical kind. The comic contrast was surely fostered also by the vulgar reference to the tavern keeper.
[50] Another proof of the extemporaneous nature of Hegem. fr. 1 could lie in the verb μετεωρίζοντες attested in fr. 1. 1 Brandt, for which cf. also Bertolini (2013). For the impromptu nature of rhapsodic performances, cf. *e.g.* Brillante, Cantilena and Pavese (1981) and Sbardella (2012).
[51] The fragment is attested in Ath. 15.698c (the whole poem) and 9.406e (only the last three verses).

hexameters of the fragment are an extraordinary source for the understanding of classical epic parody, as they represent the only example of this genre dating to the fifth century BC.[52]

ἐς δὲ Θάσον μ᾽ ἐλθόντα μετεωρίζοντες ἔβαλλον
πολλοῖσι σπελέθοισι, καὶ ὧδέ τις εἶπε παραστάς·
“ὦ πάντων ἀνδρῶν βδελυρώτατε, τίς σ᾽ ἀνέπεισε
καλὴν <ἐς> κρηπῖδα ποσὶν τοιοῖσδ᾽ ἀναβῆναι;”
τοῖσι δ᾽ ἐγὼ πᾶσιν μικρὸν μετὰ τοῦτ᾽ ἔπος εἶπον·
“μνῆ μ᾽ ἀνέπεισε γέροντα καὶ οὐκ ἐθέλοντ᾽ ἀναβῆναι
καὶ σπάνις, ἣ πολλοὺς Θασίων εἰς ὁλκάδα βάλλει
εὐκούρων βδελυρῶν, ὀλλύντων τ᾽ ὀλλυμένων τε
ἀνδρῶν, οἳ νῦν κεῖθι κακῶς κακὰ ῥαψῳδοῦσιν·
οἷς καὶ ἐγὼ σιτοῖο μέγα χρηΐζων ἐπίθησα.
αὖθις δ᾽ οὐκ ἐπὶ κέρδος ἀπείσομαι, εἰς Θασίους δὲ
μηδένα πημαίνων κλυτὸν ἄργυρον ἐγγυαλίξων,
μή τίς μοι κατὰ οἶκον Ἀχαιϊάδων νεμεσήσῃ
πεσσομένης ἀλόχου τὸν ἀχαϊνὸν ἄρτον ἀεικῶς,
καί ποτέ τις εἴπῃ σμικρὸν τυροῦντ᾽ ἐσιδοῦσα,
‘ὡς φίλη, ὠνὴρ μὲν παρ᾽ Ἀθηναίοισιν ἀείσας
πεντήκοντ᾽ ἔλαβε δραχμάς, σὺ δὲ μικρὸν ἐπέψω.’”
ταῦτά μοι ὁρμαίνοντι παρίστατο Παλλὰς Ἀθήνη
χρυσῆν ῥάβδον ἔχουσα καὶ ἤλασεν εἶπέ τε φωνῇ·
“δεινὰ παθοῦσα, Φακῆ βδελυρά, χώρει ’ς τὸν ἀγῶνα.”
καὶ τότε δὴ θάρσησα καὶ ἤειδον πολὺ μᾶλλον.

When I came to Thasos, they hoisted numerous lumps of shit
and began to pelt me with them, and one of those present spoke thus:
“O foulest of all men—who convinced you
to go up onto the lovely stage with feet like these?”
But I addressed this one little word to all of them:
“A mina of silver convinced me, old and unwilling though I am, to go up,
along with my poverty, which drives many Thasians into cargo-ships,
well-barbered wretches, destroying and destroyed,
who now do a bad job of performing bad songs there;
this is what convinced me, in my desperate need for food.
But I will not go away after profit again, but will hand over
glorious silver to the Thasians, doing no one harm,
lest one of the Achaean women in my house express
resentment against me when my wife bakes Demeter’s bread too meagerly,
and then one of them says, seeing the tiny cheesecake,

[52] It is generally assumed that the poem was performed in Athens, probably during the Panathenaea: cf. *e.g.* Panomitros (2003). The text and the translation of the fragment are taken from Olson (2006–12). The text, with few (and ultimately negligible) differences, follows the *constitutio textus* by Brandt (1888).

‘My dear, your husband got 50 drachmas in Athens
by his singing—but you baked something small!’”
And as I was pondering these things, Pallas Athena stood beside me
with a gold wand in her hand, and she struck me with it and made a speech:
“Although you have suffered terrible things,
wretched Lentil-Soup, enter the contest.”
And then I got my courage up and sang much louder.

The poem describes the very unpleasant welcome of the speaker — probably Hegemon himself — on the island of Thasos in ‘para-epic’ language: from a linguistic point of view, none of the verses is purely Homeric, and the fragment displays a mixture of epic language and informal slang.[53] The Thasians throw dung on the protagonist who is returning home from an unspecified performance (vv. 1–4); the protagonist tries to justify his departure to Athens in the light of his poverty and promises not to leave Thasos again to look for money (vv. 5–17); the fragment ends with the appearance of Athena, who like a *deus ex machina* comes onto the stage and incites the narrator to sing again (vv. 18–20); in the final line of the poem, the poet follows the goddess’ bidding (v. 21). Despite its brevity, the poem presents many interesting points that will be investigated in the next chapters.

1.5.2 Matro of Pitane: the *Attic Dinner-Party*

With Matro of Pitane and his *Attic Dinner-Party* we get into the fourth century BC.[54] Unlike Hegemon, for which we have very few fragments but considerable indirect information, in the case of Matro a higher number of poems have been preserved by Athenaeus, but we have hardly any evidence on his person.[55] The tradition preserves 142 lines of his works, 122 of which are taken from one poem conventionally entitled *Attic Dinner-Party*, probably to be dated between the end of the fourth and the beginning of the third century BC.[56] The remaining twenty verses seem to belong partly to a similar gastronomic work (frr. 2–6) and partly to a poem of unknown nature

[53] Cf. Tammaro (1982). As for the identity of the speaker, cf. Magnani (2014).
[54] The precise dating of Matro’s life is unknown, but the mention of some historical individuals in the poem suggests that he was born in the fourth century BC.
[55] The only source is attested in Ath. 1.5a–b (cf. *supra* p. 35).
[56] Cf. Olson and Sens (1999, 4). Given the significant number of preserved verses, I will not report in full, here, the entire text of the fragments; I will refer to the most relevant passages in the subsequent chapters. The text and the translations of the poems of Matro are taken from Olson and Sens (1999).

(fr. 7).[57] The gastronomic nature of Matro's works is confirmed in Ath. 1.5a–b, where he is enlisted among the poets who produced descriptions of dinner parties.[58] The plot of the *Attic Dinner-Party* consists in the hyperbolic description of a luxurious banquet by one of the gluttonous guests. After a proem (vv. 1–6) and a short description of two guests (vv. 7–10), the poem describes in ironically eulogistic tones the list of food and drinks served at the banquet, together with the fights which arise between the guests who rush to grab them.[59] Given the extremely poor indirect evidence for Matro's life and for his poems, their performative context is only hypothetical; his parodies, however, were very probably conceived to be performed in front of a large and public audience.[60]

1.5.3 Additional parodic material

Besides Hegemon of Thasos and Matro of Pitane, there is further material which must be taken into account and/or included in the corpus of classical *parōidia*, namely the poems of and/or the evidence on the parodists Euboeus of Paros, Boeotus of Syracuse, Nicochares, together with a small number of unattributed parodic fragments.

Our sources on Euboeus of Paros and Boeotus of Syracuse are extremely scarce and are mainly provided by quotations attested in Athenaeus. The passage by Polemon (cf. *supra* pp. 25–6), which reports that Euboeus wrote four books of parodies and that he lived at the time of Philip of Macedon (359–36 BC), gives us basically all that we have on his life and poetical production. Only two fragments from his works have been preserved, both reported in the quotation from Polemon transmitted by Athenaeus (= *SH* 411, 412) and both belonging to a poem called *The Battle of the Bathmen* (ἡ τῶν βαλανέων μάχη).[61] As for Boeotus, a fragment of Alexander Aetolus (cf. *infra*)

[57] For Matro of Pitane, cf. Olson and Sens (1999, 3–47), who have formulated reasonable hypotheses on the distribution of the fragments in different poems.
[58] Cf. *supra* p. 35 and Olson and Sens (1999, 3, 53, 75). Actually, the passage of Athenaeus does not specify whether he wrote one or more *deipna*. If we assume that the frr. 2–6 do not belong to the same poem of the fr. 1, he must have written *at least* two gastronomic works: cf. Olson and Sens (1999, 4).
[59] Behind its 'superficial' content, however, the poem has an implicit deeper meaning: an important aspect of the poem lies in its political allusions, which will be analysed in the last chapter of this work.
[60] Cf. Olson and Sens (1999, 12, 29–33).
[61] This is argued by Olson and Sens (1999), but the second fragment may well have been taken from another poem. If they are indeed from the same poem, it is arguable that both the fragments are taken from the same scene in the light of their content.

implicitly testifies that he was a contemporary of the tyrant Agatocles: we know, therefore, that he lived between the end of the fourth and the beginning of the third century BC. The sources claim that both these authors were very appreciated, and Polemon describes them as 'learned men, since they make witty remarks that can be understood several ways and are better than the poets of earlier generations, despite coming later'; slightly later, he also affirms that Euboeus made 'many witty remarks in his poems' (ὁ δὲ Εὔβοιος πολλὰ μὲν εἴρηκεν ἐν τοῖς ποιήμασιν χαρίεντα). Two additional sources testify to the poetical skills of Euboeus and Boeotus. The first is fr. 7 of Matro, in which the parodist enlists Euboeus among the 'outstanding men of old' together with four otherwise unknown poets: Hermogenes, a couple of poets called Philips, and Cleonicus.[62] The second one is the fragment of Alexander Aetolus (fr. 5. 5–8, p. 125 Powell), where the author claims that Boeotus 'composed good parodies of Homer's glorious works — cobblers, or brazen thieves; or some eunuch babbling a lot of crazy, florid words —'.[63] Unfortunately, we know nothing about the performative setting of their parodies, nor the scarce evidence allows for any reasonable assumptions: still, it is likely that the performative context of their parodies was the same of Hegemon's and Matro's.

Our sources on Nicochares and the anonymous fragments are somehow ironically complementary: while they preserve only the name of Nicochares and that of one of his parodies, but no text, they transmit a small number of fragments without any information on their author(s) and context. In the passage of the *Poetics* (cf. *supra* pp. 24–5), Aristotle mentions Nicochares as the author of a poem called the *Deiliad*. Even if we do not know when he lived, the name of his work, *Deiliad*, suggests that it was almost certainly a parody of the *Iliad*: the pun in the title plays on the adjective δειλός, -ή, -όν ('coward'), so the name of the poem would ultimately be *The Cowardice* ('*De-Iliad*').[64] The lack of additional sources on his life and his poems,

[62] Cf. Olson and Sens (1999, 11, 151–2). We know nothing about these poets, who were in all likelihood parodists. Fr. 7, which is a sort of poetical 'history' of parodic poetry, probably belongs to a work of Matro of a different nature: cf. Olson and Sens (1999, 151).

[63] In the following verses (vv. 9–10) Alexander Aetolus expresses his preference for the verses of Boetous against those of Euboeus: ὃς δὲ Βοιωτοῦ ἔκλυεν, Εὐβοίῳ τέρψεται οὐδ' ὀλίγον ('just like a Syracusan, and admired: who's heard Boeotus, relishes Euboeus not at all'). The translation of the fragment of Alexander Aetolus is taken from Lightfoot (2009, 129).

[64] Cf. Orth (2015, 11, 24–5). This would add another person to the list of the comedians/parodists. From a speculative point of view, it cannot be excluded that the *Deiliad* was a comedy instead of a parody.

however, prevents any further consideration on his life and poetical production. Finally, the six parodic fragments (frr. adesp. parod. I-VI Br.) which have been transmitted without the name of their author(s) are likely to be dated to the classical age. These poems are never identified as *parōidiai* in the sources and for this reason might not actually belong to the genre, but I have decided to include them in my analysis because they have clear parodic overtones and they fully belong to the chronological frame of this thesis.[65]

1.6 Inscriptional evidence

In the last section of this chapter I take into consideration the evidence afforded by inscriptions on stone: such evidence offers a 'direct' insight into Greek culture by offering meaningful information on the genre of epic parody. Despite its scarcity, inscriptional evidence proves that parodic performances had a specific (though often occasional) place in agonistic contexts at least until the second century BC, thus corroborating other sources on the existence of an institutionalised form of epic parody. The inscriptions I will analyse date from between the fourth and the second century BC: even if from a chronological point of view these sources do not fully fit into the timeframe of the present work, as I have showed in my previous analysis of the evidence on Hegemon of Thasos, some sources do attest the existence of agonal contexts already in the fifth century BC, and it is quite plausible to postulate the presence of similar contexts even before. These inscriptions, therefore, can be ultimately regarded as evidence of an older phenomenon.

Altogether, there are three (perhaps four) inscriptions concerning παρῳδία and they are all related to ancient musical contests.[66] The earliest and most noteworthy of them is carved on a marble *stēlē* found near Aulonari in Euboea (*IG* XII 9, 189). The inscription dates to around the mid-fourth century BC and consists in a description of

This is unlikely, however: it would be strange that Aristotle took him as representative of parody rather than of comedy, when he could choose among other definitely more 'important' and popular comedians.

[65] These poems have been sometimes attributed to the parodists mentioned in the previous pages, but no conclusive theory has been yet proposed.

[66] The shortage of epigraphical evidence on parodies suggests their frequent occasional nature of such compositions. Parodic performances, due to their apparently occasional character, might also have been organised in informal, unofficial contests: this could be the reason why documentary evidence is so scarce. For the *mousikoi agōnes*, cf. the bibliography provided by Rotstein (2012, 93 n. 4).

the arrangements made by the Eretrians to organise different artistic (both poetic and musical) contests in honour of Artemis during the month of Anthesterion:[67]

ἄρχειν δὲ τῆς μο-
υσικῆς τετράδα φθίνοντος τοῦ Ἀνθεστηρι-
ῶνος μηνός, τὴν δὲ μουσικὴν τιθεῖν ῥαψωιδοῖς,
αὐλωιδοῖς, κιθαρισταῖς, κιθαρωιδοῖς, **παρωιδοῖς**,
τοὺς δὲ τὴν μουσικὴν ἀγωνιζομένους πάντα[ς]
ἀγωνίζεσθαι προσόδιον τεῖ θυσίει ἐν τεῖ αὐλεῖ ἔ-
[χο]ντας τὴν σκευήν, ἥμπερ ἐν τοῖ ἀγῶνι ἔχουρ[ι].
[τὰ δ]ὲ ἆθλα δίδοσθαι κατὰ τάδε· ῥαψωιδοῖ ἑκατὸν εἴ-
κοσι, δευτέροι τριήκοντα, τρίτοι εἴκοσι· αὐλῳδοῖ παιδὶ πε-
ντήκοντα, δευτέροι τριήκοντα, τρίτοι εἴκοσι· ἀνδρὶ κιθαρισ-
τεῖ ἑκατὸν δέκα, δευτέροι ἑβδομήκοντα, τρίτοι πεντή-
κοντα πέντε· κιθαρωιδοῖ διηκόσια, δευτέροι ἑκατὸν
πεντήκοντα, τρίτοι ἑκατόν· **παρῳδοῖ** πεντήκοντα, δευ-
τέροι δέκα·

The 27th of the month Anthesterion is to be the first day of the music, the music competition is to be for rhapsodes, singers to the pipes, lyre-players, singers accompanying themselves on the lyre, and **singers of parodies**, and those participating in the musical contests are to take part in the processional hymn for the sacrifice in the court with the paraphernalia which they have in the contest.
Prizes are to be given in the following way: to the rhapsode 120 (drachmas), to the second 50, to the third 20; to the boy aulos-singer 50, to the second 30, to the third 20; to the adult kithara-player 110, to the second 70, to the third 55; to the adult kithara-singer 200, to the second 150, to the third 100; to the **paroidos** 50, to the second 10.[68]

Lines 9–21 are the most relevant for my argument: 9–14 report that the festival consisted in a competitive performance of rhapsodes, *aulos*-singers, *kithara*-players, *kithara*-singers and, interestingly, παρῳδοί; 15–21 give a description of the prizes for each of these categories. The meaning of the word παρῳδοί here has been debated. According to Papabasileiou (1902, 105), the first editor of the fragment, the παρῳδοί mentioned in the fragment would have been nothing but auxiliary or assistant singers.

[67] The Greek verses (ll. 8–24) and the translation are taken from Rhodes and Osborne's edition (2003). The *stēlē* is now preserved in the Museum of Eretria (inv. n. 1208). For further information on the inscription, cf. *e.g.* Rhodes and Osborne (2003, 362–5), who have dated it to 341. For further information on the festival in honour of Artemis and for the portion of the inscription that does not concern the poetical performance, cf. Rhodes and Osborne (2003) and Walker (2004, 32–5). The latter, in particular, includes information on the cultural and cultic context of the inscription.
[68] Transl. Rhodes and Osborne (2003).

This position would be supported by the fact that the other categories refer to 'performance-type', not genre: consequently, *parōidoi* should be 'backing singers', rather than parodists. This positions, however, is not entirely convincing, mostly because there are no occurrences of the word *parōidos* with this meaning. Furthermore, more clues suggest that these *parōidoi* were in fact epic parodists: first, the lexical development of the term, which in the fourth century was already understood with this meaning; second, the fact that such parodic competition are attested in literary sources at least from the fifth century BC.[69] If the word παρῳδοί — as it seems probable — identified *epic* parodists, this inscription contributes valuable information on epic parody: it states the existence of parodic contests and implies that parodic poets were held in lower esteem than other performers, given the smaller amount of the prizes destined to them.[70]

Parodic performances and competitions are attested also in another fragmentary inscription found in Delos (*IG* XI/2 120, 48).[71] Inscribed on the occasion of the festival of Apollonia in 236 BC, the inscription mentions a παρῳδός (l. 48) who performed next to other artists.[72] It belongs to the *Tabulae Archontum*, a series of inscriptions which report, year by year, the choregies of the Apollonia and of the Dionysia, the artists who had performed in the festivals and, starting from 268 BC, the catalogue of the silver vases stored in the Prytaneum.[73]

> Ἀθηναῖος· θαυματοποιο[ί]· Νουμήνιος Λυσιμαχεὺς τετράκις, Θρας …
> Θηρασιάτης … α … ας τρίς … ΟΣ … **παρωιδός** […τε]-
> τράκις· ψάλται· Δημήτριος μετὰ προσωιδίου, Κλεόστρατος μετὰ προσω[ιδίου]
>
> Athenian: puppet-showmen: Noumenios son of Lysimachus four times, Tras …
> From Thera … **parodist** … four
> times; harpers: Demetrius with prosodion, Cleostratus with prosodion

[69] In addition, I hardly understand what these mysterious 'backing singers' would have been and why they were supposed to have a specific prize, if their performance was not autonomous but depended on that of others.
[70] Not only was the parodic prize smaller than the others, it was also given only to two people instead of to three.
[71] For a general description of the inscription and of the festival, cf. *e.g.* Ringwood (1929, 455–7) and Sifakis (1968, 487–8).
[72] Degani claims that the παρῳδός in the inscription would have performed free recitals, but this is entirely conjectural.
[73] Cf. Bruneau (1970, 70–2) and Rutherford (2000).

In all likelihood, parodic performances are mentioned also in an Attic ephebic inscription (*IG* II^2 2153) found near the Asklepieion of Athens. The inscription is dated to around the third/second century BC and mentions different kinds of comic artists, including parodists:[74]

…
… ων …
[ἀ]κροά[ματα]
[κ]ωμῳδ[οί]
[Σ]τράτων
[Β]ασιλ<ι>κός?
ἀρχαιολο —
[Ἀ]σιατικός
[π]αρῳδοί
[Α]ὖλος
[Ε]ὐτύχη[ς]
…

…
Players:
Comedians
Strato
Officer?
Antiquit …
Asiatic
Parodists
Aulos
Eutuches
…

Another mention of epic parody could be conjectured in the Attic inscription *IG* II^2 2311, consisting of two separate fragments attested on a large *stēlē* of marble dated to the beginning of the fourth century BC, which describes the organisation of a Panathenaic festival.[75] The *stēlē* is divided into four parts, which deal respectively with

[74] In l. 9, the integration π]αρῳδοί has been suggested by Robert (1936) and is today accepted. Robert (1936, 235–7) maintains that the inscription from Imbros *IG* XII 8, 87 could also be related to some kind of parodic performance, since 'le mot σπουδαιογέλοιος est très rare. Il doit désigner un auteur de parodies satiriques'. However, the word σπουδαιογέλοιος does not necessarily indicate a parodist, since *spoudogeloion* is not a proper genre, but rather a stylistic tool.

[75] According to Shear (2003, 88) the inscription would be dated to 'sometime in the 380s BC and no later than 380–379'. Johnston (1987, 125 n. 1) is more doubtful on the dating and inclines towards a slightly later date (375 BC). The last edition of the inscription is by Shear (2003), who offers also plenty

musical contests, gymnastic competitions, equestrian tournaments and tribal events. In particular, the first column of the first fragment (fr. A) — dedicated to musical contests — shows a clear reference to *kithara* singers, male *aulos* singers, male *kithara*-players and *aulos* players. The heading and the ending, however, are missing and it is impossible to specify with absolute certainty the exact number of lost lines:[76]

[- - τρίτωι
*συναυληταῖς]
[- - πρώτωι τούτο στέφανος]
[- - δευτέρωι]
[- - τρίτοις
παρωιδοῖς]
[- - πρώτωι τούτο
στέφανος]
[- - δευτέρωι]

Third: …
Aulos-players:
First: a crown …
Second: …
Third: …
Parodists:
First: a
crown
Second: ...

While the upper part of the inscription probably requires a restoration with an entry for rhapsodes, it is more difficult to identify the original content of the bottom lines.[77] Rotstein (2013) has argued that they could be restored (ll. 20–28) with a reference to two categories attested in relation to Athens and the Panathenaia, namely *synaulia* and parody.[78]

of bibliography published after Kirchner's edition (cf. 2003, 87–8 nn. 3–5); supplementary bibliography also in Johnston (1987, 125 n.1).
[76] Cf. Johnston (1987, 125), Rotstein (2012, 104 n. 52), Shear (2003, 91).
[77] This hypothesis has been formulated for the first time by Mommsen (1898, 65) and has been accepted by Preuner (1922, 92), Johnston (1987, 125–6), Kotsidu (1991, 61), Shear (2003) and Rotstein (2012, 104). The restoration is quite probable in the light of the wide literary evidence on rhapsodic competitions during the Great Panathenaia between the sixth and forth century BC (cf. *e.g.* the list formulated by Rotstein 2012, 104 n. 53).
[78] Shear (2003, 91).

1.7 Conclusions

This chapter has attempted to clarify the notion of the Greek term *parōidia* from a lexical, semantic and historical perspective in order to pinpoint its different uses from the archaic to the classical age and to identify a corpus of parodic poems belonging to the codified genre of *parōidia*. In the first section (1.2), I have analysed the etymology of the term and I have pointed out that, even if the etymology by itself does not offer any definite conclusion on the historical origins of the term, it nevertheless suggests a connection with the rhapsodic sphere. In the second section (1.3), I have investigated the values of the word *parōidia* in the classical age and I have highlighted that, even in its original epic-related meaning, it was used with a double connotation, identifying at the same time an old *poetical practice* connected with rhapsody and its 'consolidation' in an out-and-out genre in the fifth century BC. In the third section (1.4), I have foregrounded the previous considerations through a cognitive approach which has tried to illustrate the complexity of the notion of *parōidia* in the classical age. In the fourth section (1.5), I have tried to identify the poems that belong to the corpus of this poetical genre and that will constitute the base for its literary, thematic analysis in the next chapters of this work. The last section (1.6) has investigated the evidence on *parōidia* afforded by stone inscriptions, which seem to confirm its existence as an independent genre in the classical age, as well as offering valuable insights into its performative setting. In the next chapters, I will stress the most important features of the genre of classical *parōidia* and I will highlight its strict connections with earlier and contemporary genres in order to contextualise it in the larger field of Greek literature.

Chapter 2
The Humour of Epic Parody

2.1 Introduction

Modern scholars have long since acknowledged the strict relationship between parody and humour, and the significance of the latter for the characterisation of the former is, today, essentially established.[1] Aesthetic bias, however, has transformed this close connection into an obstacle: the enduring depreciation of humour, resulting either in the neglect of parody or in the denial of its connection with comic elements, has in fact forestalled a correct evaluation of parody.[2] Parody often ridicules authoritative, prestigious models and, therefore, is perceived as something 'negative'; moreover, humour has frequently been considered to be devoid of aesthetic, moral and cognitive value.[3] On the contrary, numerous studies have underlined that parody, by reason of its intrinsic dialogism, stimulates a cognitive process in the re-functionalisation of its model, and that the humour results from the enjoyment of the audience in cooperating with the parodic process itself.[4] This 'cooperation' stands at the basis of the pragmatics of parody, *i.e.* of how parody actually works and of the dynamics between parodist, model and audience it entails. As several scholars have pointed out, parody relies on a sophisticated balance between these three elements, and its accomplishment is granted by the fulfillment of (at least) three essential conditions. First, the parodist must produce a parody that the audience can decipher: if the parodist conceals the hypotext too much, the audience will not be able to read it through the lens of parody, and the

[1] Cf. *e.g.* Bonafin (2001, 25–33).
[2] Cf. *e.g.* Rose (1993) and Bonafin (2001, 26). As a consequence, a separation of parody from humour has been frequently sought in order to grant parody a complex and innovative function in the evolution of literary genres and in meta-literary reflexion. In their pivotal considerations on parody (cf. *infra* ch. 5), the Russian formalists, for instance, denied a necessary connection between humour and parody, as they conceived parody just as a pure linguistic mechanism frequently characterised by comic nuances, but that can exist even without them. Thus, they ultimately underlined the formal facet of the mechanisation of parody without considering its humorous aspects.
[3] 'Authoritative' does not necessarily mean 'serious': a popular humorous text can equally become a parodic target. Bonafin (2001, 29–33) has applied the anthropological studies of Ceccarelli (1988) on the origin of laughter to parody, thus showing that parody derives from the degradation of a model that pretends to be solemn (regardless of its serious or comic nature) in a hierarchic perspective.
[4] For the significance of laughter as epistemological tool, cf. already *e.g.* Bakhtin (1968).

process results in the loss of the amusing effect.[5] Second, the parodist must consider the characteristics of the audience, such as its composition and its capacity to take part in the parodic process. Third, the audience must agree to 'play' with the parodist, to be ready to see their expectation disregarded and to become the 'accomplice' of the parodist at the expense of the model.[6] This point underlines just how crucial is the role that the audience plays in the parodic process, as it must take an active part in the decoding of parody.[7] The parodic 'mechanism', in conclusion, is possible because the audience and the parodist share a wide range of codes and previous knowledge of the model: the laughter of the audience derives from the perception of the incongruity between the original model and its reworking and from the consequent disavowal of the expectations raised by the model.[8]

As I have pointed out in the previous chapter, we know that Greek *parōidia* was, since its very origins, characterised by comic overtones; taken either as an ancient practice or as a genre, *parōidia* was always based on the *comic* reinterpretation of epic models. In the first section of this chapter, I will examine some sources which prove that *parōidia* was perceived, already in antiquity, as an inherently comic 'notion' and that ancient Greeks scholars were perfectly aware of the dialogic nature of its humour. In the subsequent two sections, I will consider the most recognisable and widespread comic techniques attested in the poems of classical *parōidia* and I will track them in earlier and contemporary poems that are characterised by an analogous exploitations of the epic model: accordingly, I will demonstrate that the techniques of the genre of classical *parōidia* were in continuity with an extensive previous and contemporary tradition of comic reformulations of epic.

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[5] This is why parodists usually try to give their audience some hints for the decoding of parody: cf. *e.g.* Rose (1979, 25–6) for a rich list of the techniques employed by parodists in order to 'signal parodies'.
[6] The audience could either 'sympathise' with the model (*i.e.* with the intrinsic 'universe' of the model) or with the parodist: however, this concerns the reception of parody, not its mechanism. Cf. Sinicropi (1981, 242) and Bonafin (1997, 37–42), who has interestingly compared the pragmatics of parody to Freud's theories on *Witz* ('joke'), drawing a correspondence between the respective elements: author of the *Witz*/parodist, audience of the *Witz*/audience of parody, mocked person/object of the parody.
[7] Cf. *e.g.* Rose (1979, 26–8).
[8] In view of this, it is easy to understand why epic parody flourished throughout the whole literary history of Greece. The existence of a pervasive cultural and literary model (the epic tradition) surely favoured the birth and the development of this poetical practice. Cf. Rose (1993) for the relation between parody and incongruity.

2.2 Parody and humour: ancient considerations

Even if some late occurrences display a 'neutral' value of *parōidia* and of its lexical family (*i.e.* devoid of comic nuances), three sources demonstrate that the word was originally connected with humour and that this intrinsic connection was perceived by the ancient Greeks. The first two of these sources concern *parōidia*, either broadly understood as a practice or specifically as a genre, in its connection with epic. The first is a fragment by the fourth-century philosopher Aristoxenus (fr. 136. 2 Wehrli *ap.* Ath. 14.638b), in which the scholar investigates the creation of parodic κιθαρῳδία:

> Ἀριστόξενος δέ φησιν: ὥσπερ τῶν ἑξαμέτρων τινὲς **ἐπὶ τὸ γελοῖον** παρῳδὰς εὗρον, οὕτως καὶ τῆς κιθαρῳδίας πρῶτος Οἰνώπας. ὃν ἐζήλωσαν Πολύευκτός τε ὁ Ἀχαιὸς καὶ Διοκλῆς ὁ Κυναιθεύς.
>
> Aristoxenus says: in the same way that some people made up parodies of hexameter lines **in order to be amusing**, so too Oenopas invented parodies of citharodic performances; Polyeuctus of Achaea and Diocles of Cynaetha followed his example.

In this fragment, Aristoxenus explicitly affirms that ancient παρῳδίαι were inherently aimed at humour (ἐπὶ τὸ γελοῖον). Even though we ignore whether Aristoxenus is speaking of the more ancient and uncodified poetical practice or specifically of the genre of *parōidia,* the reference to the hexameter metre of these compositions clearly shows that he is discussing the parody of epic material.[9] The passage, therefore, proves that Aristoxenus identified humour as a constitutive element of epic parodies. The second source is a passage from Aristotle's *Rhetoric* (1412a*,* 24–34) which belongs to a section devoted to metaphor and its typologies:

> καὶ τὰ εὖ ἠνιγμένα διὰ τὸ αὐτὸ ἡδέα· μάθησις γάρ, καὶ λέγεται μεταφορά. καὶ ὃ λέγει Θεόδωρος, τὸ καινὰ λέγειν. γίγνεται δέ, ὅταν παράδοξον ᾖ, καὶ **μή**, ὡς ἐκεῖνος λέγει, **πρὸς τὴν ἔμπροσθεν δόξαν,** ἀλλ᾽ ὥσπερ οἱ ἐν τοῖς γελοίοις τὰ παραπεποιημένα. ὅπερ δύναται καὶ τὰ παρὰ γράμμα

[9] It is impossible to know whether with *parōidia* Aristoxenus refers to the specific 'genre' or to the wider parodical 'practice'. In fact, the use of the indefinite pronoun τινες ('some people') and εὗρον (literally 'found out') in the passage may suggest that Aristoxenus was actually referring not to fifth-century parodies, but to previous, not codified, compositions. On the other hand, Aristoxenus was a disciple of Aristotle and may have used the term in the same way of his teacher. In any case, the word surely identifies a comic reuse of the epic hypotext and does not refer to the generic rhetorical meaning of 'allusion', 'quotation'.

> σκώμματα· **ἐξαπατᾷ γάρ**. καὶ ἐν τοῖς μέτροις· οὐ γὰρ ὥσπερ ὁ ἀκούων ὑπέλαβεν·
>
> ἔστειχε δ᾽ ἔχων ὑπὸ ποσσὶ χίμεθλα·
>
> ὁ δ᾽ ᾤετο πέδιλα ἐρεῖν. τούτου δ᾽ ἅμα λεγομένου δεῖ δῆλον εἶναι. τὰ δὲ παρὰ γράμμα ποιεῖ οὐχ ὃ λέγει λέγειν, ἀλλ᾽ ὃ μεταστρέφει ὄνομα [...].
>
> And clever riddles are agreeable for the same reason; for something is learnt, and the expression is also metaphorical. And what Theodorus calls 'novel expressions' arise when what follows is paradoxical, and, as he puts it, **not in accordance with our previous expectation**; just as humorists make use of slight changes in words. The same effect is produced by jokes that turn on a change of letter; **for they are deceptive.** These novelties occur in poetry as well as in prose; for instance, the following verse does not finish as the hearer expected:
>
> And he strode on, under his feet—chilblains,
>
> whereas the hearer thought he was going to say "sandals." This kind of joke must be clear from the moment of utterance. Jokes that turn on the word are produced, not by giving it the proper meaning, but by perverting it [...].[10]

This passage implies that ancient Greek theorists were aware of the intrinsic mechanism behind parodic humour, which — as I have previously mentioned — derives from the perception of the incongruence between the expectations of the audience and the actual parodic reworking of the model. Aristotle argues that the humour of riddles derives from the deception (ἐξαπατᾷ) of the audience's expectations and compares the mechanism of riddles to that triggered by humorists who change words or letters. In order to illustrate the humour created by the change of a single word, Aristotle quotes an unattributed hexametric verse which makes a comic reuse of epic language and which has been usually enlisted in the fragments of epic parody (fr V Br.): the quotation of this verse implies the connection between this mechanism to the genre of *parōidia*. The permeation between *parōidia* — in its wider sense, not necessarily connected with epic — and humour is confirmed also by a passage (Hermog. *Meth.* 34, 1–4) of the work *On the method of speaking effectively* (wrongly

[10] The translation and the text is taken from Freese (1926). For a general overview on the passage, cf. *e.g.* Gastaldi (2014, 588–9).

attributed to the rhetorician Hermogenes), in which *parōidia* is listed among the rhetorical techniques aimed at speaking humorously and mocking at the same time:

> Τοῦ κωμικῶς λέγειν ἅμα καὶ σκώπτειν ἀρχαίως τρεῖς μέθοδοι· **τὸ κατὰ παρῳδίαν σχῆμα**, τὸ παρὰ προσδοκίαν, τὸ ἐναντίας ποιεῖσθαι τὰς εἰκόνας τῇ φύσει τῶν πραγμάτων.
>
> In older style, there were three techniques of speaking humorously and mocking at the same time: **the one which entails parody**, the one which consists in going against the expectation, the one of representing the contrary of reality [lit. 'images that are contrary to the nature of the facts']

Unlike the passage of Aristoxenus, the word *parōidia* here does not refer to the classical practice and/or genre of *parōidia*, but to a later, extended rhetorical value of the term.[11] Still, this passage openly connects humour and parody and proves that the parodic mechanism, taken as a rhetorical technique, was perceived as inherently comic.[12]

2.3 The comic techniques of classical epic parody

As I have previously shown, parodic humour is ultimately based on incongruence, as it relies on the deception of the audience's expectations. The incongruence can be triggered by different mechanisms that have been variously categorised by scholars in accordance with the nature of the intertextual processes that underlie them. In this section, I will illustrate the mechanisms attested in the fragments of classical epic parody. It is important to bear in mind that, since several of the fragments — especially the longest ones — actually display more than just one of these techniques, I will often draw my examples from the same texts (in particular from the parodic fragment of Hegemon and from Matro's *Attic Dinner-Party*, both a goldmine of parodic techniques). In addition, it must be pointed out that my identification of these techniques does not follow any ancient schema: as I have pointed out, ancient Greek

[11] This is proved by the fact that Pseudo-Hermogenes bolsters his view by mentioning additional examples taken from authors who were not epic parodists.

[12] This passage shows also that *parōidia* was perceived as strictly connected with criticism (Τοῦ κωμικῶς λέγειν *ἅμα καὶ σκώπτειν* ἀρχαίως τρεῖς μέθοδοι, 'In older style, there were three techniques of speaking humorously *and mocking at the same time*'), an aspect that I will investigate in the last chapter of this thesis.

scholars never identified *parōidia* with a a *single* comic technique, but rather they conceived it as a general intertextual practice. In other terms, they never singled out a particular type of intertextual relation as belonging to *parōidia*, but they included in the concept any comic reworking of a model. In this respect, my proposed identification of the different techniques of epic parody diverges from the attempts to distinguish parody from analogous intertextual practices (cf. *e.g.* allusion, travesty, caricature, pastiche, cento etc.) that have been variously suggested by modern scholars with ultimately unsatisfactory results. It goes without saying that the distinction I propose is arbitrary and that different techniques may coexist in the same poem.

The first technique consists in the use of epic diction and patterns for the description of 'low' characters and subjects. The rationale of this technique lies in the fact that each literary genre is characterised by specific contents that, taken together, identify the genre itself: in epic poetry, contents are stereotypically 'high', as they chiefly consist in heroic or theogonic/didactic subjects and themes (in the case of Homer and Hesiod respectively). By portraying primarily vulgar subjects, decontextualising epic expressions and subjects, and cast them in bathetic contexts, epic parody tears this implicit association apart: the disruption of the expectations generated by this technique, therefore, consists in the dissociation between stereotypical language and its content.[13] The second technique is caricature, that is the witty depiction of epic characters and the comic disruption of epic elements and patterns such as scenes, motifs, structures.[14] These first two techniques are, in some way, complementary: in both of them, the humour is based on the discrepancy between the subjects and the way they are depicted. In one case, low subjects are described in the epic register; in the other, epic characters are cast in a trivial context. By contrast, the third technique that I am going to analyse has a purely linguistic nature and consists in different ways of playing with the formulary language of the model: in other words, it is based on the humorous, linguistic modification of epic expressions.[15] Just like the

[13] It is obvious that also the use of the hexameter — the epic meter *par excellence* — for the depiction of vulgar subjects is ultimately an instance of this type of humour. However, I will investigate the relation between parody and its metre in the fourth chapter of this work.
[14] Motifs and scenes are reasons frequently associated in epic, as a motif usually coincides with a typical scene. The parody of Homeric scenes is connected with the notion of mythical travesty: for an inclusive and updated work on *Mythentravestie*, cf. Casolari (2003, 27–45), who devotes also a whole section to the theorical and historical connections between parody and travesty.
[15] Cf. Condello (2002).

previous ones, this technique is based on the incongruence which arises between the expectations of the audience and the actual reworkings of epic language made by the parodist: given the strongly formalised nature of epic diction, any modification could be easily perceived by the audience, which would laugh at the hilarious reworking of the epic model. The re-elaboration, more specifically, could take different shapes and I have identified three sub-techniques. The first one is what Genette calls 'minimal parody', which consists in a slight reworking of a fixed epic formula: this technique plays on the ambiguous phonetic similarity with the epic model and creates playful *calembours*. The second technique consists in the mixture of solemn epic language with 'vulgar' (primarily obscene and dialectal) words: in this case, the incongruence originates in the unexpected connection between elements of opposite nature.[16] The third technique is based on the employment of an epic word or expression with another meaning or in an incongruent context, thus exploiting the ambiguity of the word itself.[17]

2.3.1 Mock-epic descriptions

The first technique characterises the whole extant fragment of Hegemon of Thasos, which seemingly represents a parody of the last section of the *Odyssey*: the narrator, a wretched rhapsode who has gone to Athens in search of fortune, embodies a sort of 'parodic Odysseus' who is going back home after his peregrinations. At least four elements seem to prove this theory. First, the protagonist of the fragment, just like Odysseus, goes back home as an old poor man and receives an unfriendly welcome from his compatriots.[18] Second, the narrator's 'companions' are likely to be parodic

[16] It goes without saying that this technique is strictly related to the previous ones, as the description of base subjects requires the insertion of vulgar elements in epic diction. The reference to vulgar elements, in addition, is strictly connected to popular culture, as the following chapter will prove.
[17] This is the kind of humour that Vergados (2013, 27) calls 'situational parody'.
[18] Overall, the passage also recalls the episode of the *Odyssey* in which Phemius, the bard of the court of Ithaca, explains to Odysseus the reasons that have forced him to sing for the Suitors (*Od.* 22.344–52). Just like the narrator of the fragment, Phemius is a threatened rhapsode who puts forward external coercion (οὔ τι ἑκών, v. 341 and ἀνάγκῃ, v. 353) to justify his singing for the Suitors. Svenbro (1984, 35) has interestingly explored the connection between Phemius and ἀνάγκη, showing how the rhapsodic performance was generally constrained by social control. Similarly, in this fragment Hegemon seems to justify himself meta-poetically in front of his actual audience: through the words of the protagonist of the fragment, Hegemon might have aimed at justifying indirectly the poor quality of his own performance. This hypothesis is made even stronger if one accepts that this fragment was a kind of

parallels of Odysseus' comrades: in v. 8, the narrator calls them εὔκουροι βδελυροί, an expression focused on one aspect of their body, the hair, that seems to be a comic antiphrastic allusion to the epic formula κάρη κομόωντες Ἀχαιοί ('longhaired Achaeans').[19] Third, the narrator's wife seems to be a parodic *alter ego* of Odysseus' wife, Penelope.[20] The humour is triggered by the contrast between the regal standing of Penelope and that of the protagonist's wife, all intent on baking a modest lunch. The humour results also from the different type of welcome given by the two wives: while Penelope, once she has discovered Odysseus' identity, heartily greets him, the narrator's wife unkindly ignores her husband. The bathetic allusion to Odysseus works also on a micro-textual level, as confirmed by v. 13 (μή τίς μοι κατὰ οἶκον Ἀχαιϊάδων νεμεσήσῃ): the verse is moulded on the epic formula μή τίς μοι κατὰ δῆμον Ἀχαιϊάδων νεμεσήσῃ, an expression pronounced by Penelope to express her fear of being criticised by the Achaean women because she was not weaving the shroud for her father-in-law, Laertes.[21] Hegemon puts similar words in the mouth of the narrator, who is afraid of being criticised by the women of Thasos because his wife had not prepared for him an adequate culinary reward. The reference to the 'Achaean women', in this context, is humorous as it is de-contextualised from its original frame of reference and bathetically reused in a vulgar context: not only could generic women hardly be habitually called by the magniloquent, epic adjective 'Achaean' in the fifth century BC, but the elevated expression does not fit in with the humble context to which the narrator is referring. Another instance of this technique concerns the word εὐκούρων in v. 8, which etymologically means 'well-shaved' and refers to the wretched Thasians who sail to Athens because of their poverty. Hegemon uses the prefix εὐ- antiphrastically: while in epic it is employed to describe subjects positively, here it is

prooimion (cf. i*nfra* p. 61). If so, Hegemon might have exploited it as a way to justify any possible mistake in the improvised performance that follows it.

[19] The exact meaning of εὐκούρων — a hapax in the entirety of Greek literature — has been extensively debated, and some scholars have even proposed to emend it: cf. Bertolini (2013).

[20] The reference to the ἄλοχος ('wife', v. 14) of the epic hero is a key element of the '*nostos* theme': cf. Alexopoulou (2009, 41–4).

[21] *Od*. 2.101, 19.146, 24.136. The reference to the hair of the Thasians in the fragment of Hegemon is probably not a coincidence: in fifth-century Athens, long hair was a stereotypical feature of aristocrats and of social categories (philosophers, sophists, knights etc.) that were harshly criticised by comedians. Therefore, it is likely that Hegemon used parody to criticise the clichés of contemporary people.

incongruously used to create an abusive compound referring to the forlorn companions of the narrator.[22]

This comic technique is pervasively employed by Matro, who exploits epic formulas that often qualify solemn subject matter to describe the characters who take part in the dinner-party described in his poem.[23] The guests are ludicrously described with epic formulas that appear to exalt their epic standing even if they are in fact gluttonous parasites. In vv. 7–10, for example, the guests are preposterously portrayed as Homeric chiefs through the allusion to some specific epic passages:

> αὐτὸς δὲ Ξενοκλῆς ἐπεπωλεῖτο στίχας ἀνδρῶν,
> στῆ δ' ἄρ' ἐπ' οὐδὸν ἰών. σχεδόθεν δέ οἱ ἦν παράσιτος
> Χαιρεφόων, πεινῶντι λάρῳ ὄρνιθι ἐοικώς,
> νῆστις, ἀλλοτρίων εὖ εἰδὼς δειπνοσυνάων.
>
> Xenocles himself went about, inspecting the ranks of men,
> And came and stood on the threshold. Close by him was the parasite
> Chaerephon, a man resembling a hungry sea-gull.
> starving, and well acquainted with other people's dinings.

More specifically, Xenocles is portrayed by means of the same expressions used in the *Iliad* by Priam when he describes Odysseus in the *Teichoscopia* (3.196), while the depiction of Chaerephon draws an implicit parallel between him and Hector (*Il.* 16.800).[24] Matro does not apply this technique only in the description of the diners, but in that of the cooks as well: in vv. 11–3, they are described by means of an expression moulded on the Homeric portrayal of the Horae (cf. *e.g. Il.* 5.750–1), the guardians of the cloud-gates of Heaven:[25]

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[22] Cf. *e.g. Il.* 1.17 ἐϋκνήμιδες Ἀχαιοί ('well-greaved Achaeans'), *Il.* 1.429 ἐϋζώνοιο γυναικὸς, ('well-girdled woman'), *Il.* 1.448 ἐΰδμητον … βωμόν ('well-built … altar').

[23] It is not my purpose to make a full list of the many instances of this technique: I will report only some examples. More detailed analyses have been already partially made by Olson and Sens (1999, 33–40) and more thoroughly by Condello (2002; 2006). When not otherwise specified, Matro's verses are taken from the long fr. 1, which alone cointains all the techniques that I am going to analyse.

[24] Moreover, Chaerephon is described as Hermes who flies over the sea on his way to the island of Calypso (*Od.* 5.51). In v. 14, a standard Homeric formula for dining (ἐπὶ... ἴαλλον, cf. *e.g. Il.* 9.91) is used to refer to the guests, thus implicitly comparing them to the epic protagonists. The description, sometimes, matches the guests with 'secondary' characters such as the Suitors (cf. v. 10) and Polyphemus (cf. vv. 15–16): cf. Olson and Sens (1999, 81, 85).

[25] Cf. Condello (2002) for a possible textual corruption in the passage. In vv. 42–3, Matro says that the eel served to the diners is so huge that it cannot be lifted even by two well-known fourth-century athletes, namely Astyanax and Antenor (cf. Olson and Sens 1999, 100–1). In this passage, Matro

τέως δὲ μάγειροι μὲν φόρεον πλῆσάν τε τραπέζας,
οἷς ἐπιτετράφαται μέγας οὐρανὸς ὀπτανιάων,
ἠμὲν ἐπισπεῦσαι δείπνου χρόνον ἠδ' ἀναθεῖναι.

Meanwhile the cooks began to bring tables and load them up:
To them has been entrusted the great vault of the cookhouses,
That they might both hasten the dinner-hour and put it off.

Sometimes, Matro employs this technique to describe even the food served at the banquet. In vv. 22–3 and 73–5, he actually implicitly compares two different races of fish to epic goddesses and noble women by alluding to two elements that characterise them in epic depictions, namely the veil and the belt:[26]

ἡ δὲ Φαληρικὴ ἦλθ' ἀφύη, Τρίτωνος ἑταίρη,
ἄντα παρειάων σχομένη ῥυπαρὰ κρήδεμνα

The Phaleric small-fry, Triton's companioness, arrived,
holding before her cheeks a dirty veil.

μύραιναν δ' ἐπέθηκε φέρων, τὸ κάλυμμα τραπέζης,
ζώνην θ', ἣν φορέεσκεν ἀγαλλομένη περὶ δειρήν,
εἰς λέχος ἡνίκ' ἔβαινε Δρακοντιάδῃ μεγαθύμῳ.

(A cook) brought and served moray eel, the table's veil,
and her belt, which she used to wear with pride about her neck
when she went off to bed with the great-hearted Son of Serpent.

An epic-like, playful depiction of a 'humble' subject is likely to be attested also in fr. adesp. 7, a cento of two Homeric expressions employed to describe Ares and Achilles:

ὦ βροτολοιγέ, πόσους σὺ <βρο>τῶν ῎Αιδι προΐαψας

O slayer of mortals, how many mortals have you sent forth to Ades?

amusingly parallels the athletes to epic heroes by playing with their names, which recall those of the omonymous epic heroes.

[26] Another example of this technique is attested in v. 53, where the patronymic θαλαμηιάδαο ('Son of Fish-lair') represents a peculiar humorous reuse of nominal formation and is bathetically used to qualify a tuna. Likewise, in fr. 4. 1–2, a cucumber is dignified through the ironic description of its genealogy, a stylistic trope that in epic poems often celebrates the glorious lineages of the heroes.

According to the sources, the verse was addressed to an unskilled physician: this suggests that it belonged to a longer hilarious depiction of a bad doctor who was accused of several accidental deaths due to his ineptitude. The comic charge is caused not only by the bombastic description of an incompetent person, but also by the implicit comparison between the 'killers' described by those expression: on the one side Ares (the god of war) and Achilles (the most efficient and reckless soldier of the Achaean army), on the other side a doctor who is not even able to save his patients and kills them by mistake.[27]

2.3.2 Caricature of epic

In spite of its brevity, the fragment of Hegemon displays a unique cluster of different kinds of caricatures, which concern epic characters, motifs, scenes and structural patterns. As for the caricature of epic characters, in the vv. 18–20 we find a caricatural depiction of Athena, probably aimed at strengthening the implicit relationship between the protagonist of the poem and his heroic counterpart. The caricature of Athena — the patron goddess of Odysseus — is based on two main aspects. First, she incongruously comes onto the scene holding Hermes' (not Athena's) stereotypical tool, the *rhabdos*.[28] Second, in v. 20 she speaks in a colloquial way which is incongruous with her divine status. In the poem we find also several caricatures of epic motifs and scenes. From a general perspective, the poem probably represents a parodic reinterpretation of the so-called '*nostos* pattern', well attested in the epic tradition, although the emphasis of the fragment is not on the adventures experienced by the poet far from his homeland, but rather on his problematic return.[29] From a closer examination, we find a caricature of epic motifs in the first couplet of the poem, in

[27] The fragment is reported by the *Etymologicum Magnum* (p. 215, 7). This interpretation is based on the evidence provided by the *Vossianus* codex of the *EM*, which reports that the lemma was directed against the doctors (κυρίως δὲ ἐπὶ ἰατρῶν ἡ λέξις παραλαμβάνεται), and by the parallel in Eust. *ad. Il.* 5.31 p. 518, 41: cf. Brandt (1888, 99–100). The Homeric expressions are *Il.* 5.31 (Ἄρες Ἄρες βροτολοιγέ and) *Il.* 1.3 (πολλὰς δ' ἰφθίμους ψυχὰς Ἄϊδι προΐαψεν ἡρώων).
[28] Cf. *e.g.* Melena (1972, 341–2).
[29] With the expression '*nostos* pattern' I refer to the topos of homecoming, well attested in epic poems and, in general, in Greek literature: cf. *e.g.* Alexopoulou (2009). Hegemon's hypotext may be not only the *Odyssey*, but also the broader corpus of *nostoi* contained in the Epic Cycle, which were already being re-used by fifth-century tragedy and therefore well known at Hegemon's time: cf. Davies (1989), West (2003a) and Debiasi (2004).

which the fellow citizens of the narrator throw dung at him: this scene recalls several Homeric passages in which the Suitors throw objects at the disguised Odysseus or, more generally, the Homeric battle scenes in which heroes throw objects to hit their enemies.[30] An interesting caricature of epic scenes is attested in vv. 11–12 and 19, in which we find an explicit allusion to two specific Hesiodic passages: even if the tone of the fragment is predominantly Homeric, a more detailed inspection of the fragment discloses also some Hesiodic reminiscences. [31] First, the description that the narrator gives of himself and of the reasons that pushed him into the sea in vv. 10–12: the verses recall the lengthy passage of the *Works and Days* (vv. 618–94), in which the poet explains to his brother Perses the periods suitable for navigation. In vv. 631–8, in particular, Hesiod's explicit reference to κέρδος ('profit'), poverty and hunger as the reasons that push poor people to sea-trade closely resembles Hegemon's own reasons for sailing away in the first place (vv. 6–10):[32]

καὶ τότε νῆα θοὴν ἅλαδ᾽ ἑλκέμεν, ἐν δέ τε φόρτον
ἄρμενον ἐντύνασθαι, ἵν᾽ οἴκαδε **κέρδος** ἄρηαι·
ὥς περ ἐμός τε πατὴρ καὶ σὸς μέγα νήπιε Πέρση
πλωίζεσκ᾽ ἐν νηυσὶ **βίου κεχρημένος ἐσθλοῦ**.
ὅς ποτε καὶ τύιδ᾽ ἦλθε πολὺν διὰ πόντον ἀνύσσας
Κύμην Αἰολίδα προλιπὼν ἐν νηὶ μελαίνῃ,
οὐκ ἄφενος **φεύγων** οὐδὲ πλοῦτόν τε καὶ ὄλβον,
ἀλλὰ **κακὴν πενίην**, τὴν Ζεὺς ἄνδρεσσι δίδωσιν·

and then drag your swift boat down to the sea, arrange the cargo in it and get it ready so that you can bring **the profit** home, just as my father and yours, Perses, you great fool, used to sail in boats, **deprived as he was of a fine means of life.** Once he came here too, after he had crossed over a big sea, leaving behind Aeolian Cyme in a black boat, **fleeing** not wealth nor riches nor prosperity, but **evil poverty**, which Zeus gives to men.[33]

[30] Cf. *e.g. Od*. 13.429–30, 16.455–7. The expression ποσὶν τοιοῖσδ᾽ (v. 4) suggests that the protagonist is unable to walk properly: this particular impairment could constitute an allusion to other lame epic characters such as Thersites, Hephaestus and Oedipus. In addition, the feet have an iconic value in epic, where they represent a topos in the description of heroes: cf. Brelich (1958, 244–6), Bettini and Borghini (1986, 223) and Neri (2003, 339–41). This element recalls fifth-century tragic characters, who show physical malformations or wounds in the legs or feet (cf. *e.g.* Oedipus and Philoctetes) and whom are mocked in comedies precisely for this reason (cf. *e.g.* Ar. *Ach*. 410–12, *Pax* 146).
[31] Hesiod was very popular with fifth-century audiences: cf. *e.g.* Koning (2010). For the Hesiodic reminiscences in the fragment of Hegemon, cf. Panomitros (2003, 158).
[32] The reference to κέρδος appears again in v. 644 (ἐπὶ κέρδει κέρδος), while poverty and hunger crop up also in vv. 645–6 εὖτ᾽ ἂν ἐπ᾽ ἐμπορίην τρέψας ἀεσίφρονα θυμὸν | βούληαι χρέα τε προφυγεῖν καὶ λιμὸν ἀτερπέα ('If you turn your foolish spirit to commerce and decide to flee debts and joyless hunger').
[33] The text and the translations are taken from Most (2006).

Nonetheless, the most vivid Hesiodic memory is attested in v. 19, where the reference to the ῥάβδος held by Athena recalls the poetical investiture of Hesiod at the beginning of his *Theogony* (vv. 22–34). In that very well-known passage, the poet meets the Muses on Mount Helicon; in vv. 29–31, in particular, Hesiod describes the epiphany of the Muses, who teach him how to be a singer and urge him to collect a laurel branch (a σκῆπτρον) and to hold it during his recitation.[34] This element is crucial also for the analysis of the fragment in its overall structure: the fact that, in the last extant verses, we find a sort of parodic 'poetic investiture', a motif that traditionally belongs to the first part of the composition, suggest that the fragment, from a formal point of view, constituted the *prooimion* of a longer poem.[35] This point seems to be proved also by vv. 18–20, in which Athena appears and urges the speaker to return to Athens in order to recite his verses; as a consequence, the protagonist resolves to take part in a contest and to sing again: καὶ τότε δὴ θάρσησα καὶ ἤειδον πολὺ μᾶλλον (v. 21). This scene recalls the usual structure of the end of epic hymns, in which the poet bids farewell to the god through the recurrent closing expression αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ καὶ σεῖο καὶ ἄλλης μνήσομ' ἀοιδῆς ('but I will remember you as well as another song'); this, in turn introduced the performing of the epic poem which would follow the hymn.[36]

Caricature is equally various and extensively used in Matro's poem, where it concerns almost exclusively divine subjects. One instance can be found in the very incipit of the poem, in which the association of the Muses with the topic of the poem, a lavish *deipna*, sounds like a playful downscaling of their poetical prerogatives. While

[34] Cf. *e.g.* Pucci (2007) and West (1994, 159–61), who, within a set of 'conventional elements' typical of divine epiphany, enumerates some that recur also in the epiphany of Athena in the fragment of Hegemon. First, in both the passages the divinity addresses the poet directly, urging him to sing (v. 36) in accordance with a popular topos: cf. *e.g.* West (1994, 159). Second, Hegemon shares with Hesiod the mention of the *nomen auctoris* (cf. Hesiod, v. 22). As for the symbolic value of the laurel, cf. Pucci (2007, 71–2) and Kambylis (1965, 17–19). The most important playful antecedent of this Hesiodic scene is the inscription of Mnesiepes, which recounts Archilochus' poetical initiation by the Muses: cf. *e.g.* Miralles (1981).

[35] Cf. *e.g.* Kambylis (1965, 11) and Condello (2007, 22). The most important example is, for instance, Hesiod's investiture by the Muses in the *Theogony* (vv. 22–34).

[36] Cf. *e.g. h.Cer.* 495, *h.Ap.* 546, *h.Merc.* 580 and similar expressions (cf. *e.g. h.Ven.* 293). If this hypothesis is correct, this fragment would add a further correlation between parody and rhapsody: just like rhapsodes, parodists may have also introduced their poems with a sort of 'parodic hymn' In addition, the god invoked at the end of the hymn was often connected with the occasion of the performance; since Hegemon's performance probably took place at the Panathenaic festival, the reference to Athena at the end of the fragment could be a parodic *variatio* on this hymnodic practice.

in the epic tradition the Muse (or the Muses) are asked by the narrator to disclose some unveiled truths (cf. *e.g. Il.* 2.484–92, Hes. *Th.* 22–34), in this poem they are comically invoked to help him to report his culinary experience. An explicit caricature of a divine character is attested also in vv. 102–3:

> χόνδρος δ' ἡδυπρόσωπος, ὃν Ἥφαιστος κάμεν ἕψων,
> Ἀττικῷ ἐν κεράμῳ πέσσων τρισκαίδεκα μῆνας.
>
> And sweet-faced porridge, which Hephaestus worked to boil,
> cooking it for thirteen months in an Attic pot.

In this couplet, Hephaestus has been typically taken as a metonymy for fire.[37] It is probable, however, that Matro is actually making a caricature of the god: instead of portraying him in the act of forging a piece of his magnificent craftmanship, he is portrayed as nothing but a cook who stirs some porridge: his hammer becomes a spoon, his kiln a cooking pot. Specific Homeric scenes and motifs are often the model of Matro's poem. Matro plays, for instance, on the gluttony of the banqueters by comparing their fight for food to Homeric battles and duels. This is clear in vv. 28–32, where the narrator describes the fight of the diners for the best delicacies by adapting the stereotypical elements of a typical epic battle scene. In vv. 28–9, in particular, the narrator maintains that he has been the victim of Apollo's deceit, as he has not been able to grab and devour a red mullet carried on the table:

> τῇ δ' ἐγὼ ἐν πρώτοις ἔπεχον κρατερώνυχα χεῖρα,
> οὐδ' ἔφθην τρώσας μιν, ἄειρε δὲ Φοῖβος Ἀπόλλων.
>
> I was among the first to put a strong-clawed hand to it,
> But I did not wound it before the others; for Phoebus Apollo led me wrong.

Even if the expression lacks close parallels, it has been correctly argued that the model here is the scene of Patroclus who is betrayed by Apollo during his fight against Hector in *Il.* 16.804–6.[38] Another interesting reuse of epic patterns is attested in vv. 98–9,

[37] Cf. Olson and Sens (1999, 133).
[38] Cf. Olson and Sens (1999, 94).

where Chaerephon, one of the guests, puzzles over which one of the thirteen ducks previously served (vv. 95–8) he should devour:

> Χαιρεφόων δ' ἐνόησεν ἅμα πρόσσω καὶ ὀπίσσω
> ὄρνιθας γνῶναι καὶ ἐναίσιμα σιτίζεσθαι.
>
> Chaerephon looked back and forth at the same time
> To recognise the birds and feed on what was allotted to him.

In this scene, Matro amusingly describes Chaerephon's decisional thought-process in the same way in which Homer describes Halitherses' ornithomancy (*Od.* 24.452).[39] Finally, structural caricature is also well attested in Matro's poem, which consists of a proem containing an invocation to the Muse followed by the description of the (bathetic, 'culinary') *res gestae* of the protagonists who fight for the best morsel. This structure closely resembles that of the *Iliad* (and other lost martial epic poems). In addition, the constant presence of lists of food and drinks mocks the Iliadic and Hesiodic catalogues of heroes. Additional support on this point seems to be given by the fact that some elements contained in the Iliadic *Catalogue of Ships* are *verbatim* reported in some passages of the poem.[40]

One of the two extant fragments of Euboeus of Paros (*SH* 412) is a caricature of a specific epic scene.[41] This fragment plays with epic language and is an overt caricature of the scene of the *Iliad* in which Nestor intervenes in the quarrel of Agamemnon and Achilles over Briseis:[42]

> μήτε σὺ τόνδ' ἀγαθός περ ἐὼν ἀποαίρεο, κουρεῦ,
> μήτε σύ, Πηλεΐδη
>
> Neither do you, brave man though you are, rob this fellow, barber,
> nor do you, son of Mud . . .

[39] Cf. Olson and Sens (1999, 130–1).
[40] Cf. fr. 1. 48–50, 95–7, 119–20 and fr. 3. 1.
[41] For the work of Euboeus, from which this fragment is probably taken, cf. *supra* pp. 41–2. Some considerations on this passage can be found in Sens (2011, 187–8).
[42] *Il.* 1.275–7 μήτε σὺ τόνδ' ἀγαθός περ ἐὼν ἀποαίρεο κούρην, | ἀλλ' ἔα ὥς οἱ πρῶτα δόσαν γέρας υἷες Ἀχαιῶν· | μήτε σὺ Πηλείδη 'θελ' ἐριζέμεναι βασιλῆϊ

As the source which transmits the fragment informs us, the passage describes a barber who insults a potter on account of a woman (λοιδορουμένου κουρέως τῷ κεραμεῖ τῆς γυναικὸς χάριν). In particular, the first verse plays on the substitution of the original epic κούρην ('girl') with κουρεῦ ('barber'). The second verse is a pun on the patronymic Πηλεΐδη, which is intended as 'son of mud' (from πηλός, 'mud') instead of 'son of Peleus'.[43]

Caricatural hints are attested also in fr. adesp. parod. 4 Br., a single-verse parodic fragment attested in a section of the *Deipnosophistae* by Athenaeus of Naucratis devoted to *hetairai* and courtesans (13.571b). In this scene, Myrtilus, one of the banqueters, while defending himself from the accusations of Cynulcus, compares the latter to some unknown characters mentioned in a parodic poem:

> οὓς ἐδίδαξαν ἀριστερὰ γράμματα Μοῦσαι,
>
> whom the Muses taught left-handed letters

This fragment, despite its brevity, showcases an obvious caricature of the epic topos of the invocation to the Muses, whom are usually called upon to infuse the poet with their poetic knowledge.[44] In this fragment, however, the Muses teach 'left-handed letters', plausibly a sarcastic way to say that the letters are 'wrong' and, accordingly, to imply the ignorance of the (unknown) characters described.[45]

2.3.3 Linguistic parody

The Hegemon fragment displays several instances of the diverse typologies of linguistic parody, namely 'minimal parody', incongruent mixture of epic and 'vulgar' registers and de-contextualisation or re-semanticisation of an epic term. The first type is attested, for instance, at the beginning of v. 2 (πολλοῖσι σπελέθοισι, 'lumps of shit'), in which we find the substitution of the formulaic expression ἐν πολλοῖσι βέλεσσιν (cf.

[43] These two linguistic puns are respectively a minimal parody and the re-contextualisation of an epic word: cf. *infra* in the section on 'linguistic parody'.
[44] Cf. *e.g. Od.* 8.481.
[45] Cf. *e.g.* Gambato (2001, 1449 n. 1).

e.g. Il. 13.555) with a scurrilous reference, in *aprosdoketon*, to the excrement thrown at the protagonist. The obscene reference contained in this verse also constitutes an example of the second technique, as it exploits the contrast between the overall epic tone set by the first verse and the aischrologic incipit of the second in order to provoke laughter. Moreover, v. 3 continues with the expression πάντων ἀνδρῶν βδελυρώτατε ('foulest of all men'), which is a vulgar reworking of the formula ἠὲ σὺ Πηλεΐδη πάντων ἐκπαγλότατ' ἀνδρῶν (*Il.* 1.146, 18.170, 20.389). Likewise, in v. 7, the epic noun ἄλοχος ('wife') — attested in the same metrical position in *Il*. 1.414, *Od*. 13.36, 23.165, 346 — is qualified by the word πεσσομένη ('baking'): Hegemon combines a Homeric term (surely perceived as obsolete in the language of his time) with a participle referring to a colloquial practice.[46] A refined example of the third type of linguistic parody can be found in the incipit of v. 6, which mentions the *mina* (an Athenian monetary unit, here used as a metonymy for 'money').[47] The phonetic sequence of the first four letters of the verse (μνημα) could have lent themselves to be hilariously misinterpreted by the audience as the beginning of a word of higher stylistic calibre belonging to the semantic sphere of μιμνήσκω (*e.g.* μνῆμα), the stereotypical verb of poetic action which is well attested in epic poems.[48]

Matro's poem similarly presents all the typologies of linguistic parody. The first technique — which is pervasively employed by Matro — is attested, for instance, in the incipit of the work (vv. 1–6), which is an explicit parody of the first verses of the *Odyssey*:

> Δεῖπνά μοι ἔννεπε, Μοῦσα, πολυτρόφα καὶ μάλα πολλά,
> ἃ Ξενοκλῆς ῥήτωρ ἐν Ἀθήναις δείπνισεν ἡμᾶς·
> ἦλθον γὰρ κἀκεῖσε, πολὺς δέ μοι ἔσπετο λιμός.
> οὗ δὴ καλλίστους ἄρτους ἴδον ἠδὲ μεγίστους,
> λευκοτέρους χιόνος, ἔσθειν δ' ἀμύλοισιν ὁμοίους·
> τάων καὶ Βορέης ἠράσσατο πεσσομενάων.

[46] Another striking contrast is attested in vv. 18–21: while the language of vv. 18, 19 and 21 is almost entirely epic, v. 20 is, by contrast, characterised by a low register.
[47] Philologically speaking, the word is debated, but is today widely accepted. Cf. Tammaro (1997, 124–5) for a discussion on the dialectal patina of the word, which might disclose further comic nuances.
[48] Cf. *e.g. Il.* 9.647, 17.671, 24.486, where the verb is at the beginning of a speech, and *h.Merc.* 4.1, 8.1–2. The personification of Memory, Μνημοσύνη, recurs in epic poetry at the beginning of the verse, as in *e.g.* Eumel. *PEG* fr. 16. 1. It is also possible that in this fragment the word μνῆ (*mina*, v. 6) identified the personification of an invented divinity called 'Mina', a humorous reminiscence of the frequent personifications attested in Hesiod.

Dinners describe to me, Muse, much-nourishing and very numerous,
which Xenocles the orator dined us on in Athens;
for I went there as well, and a great hunger accompanied me
where indeed I saw very large and lovely loaves of bread,
whiter than snow, with a taste that resembled wheat-paste cakes;
the North Wind fell in love with them as they were baking.

The first verse is almost a *verbatim* quotation of the first verse of the Homeric poem, but the Homeric word ἄνδρα is here substituted with δεῖπνα: just as in the *Odyssey*, the first word proclaims the subject of the poem. Πολυτρόφα is a comic reformulation of the epic πολύτροπον which plays on the phonetic and structural (they are both compounds) similarity between the two terms. Likewise, v. 3 is a minimal parody (with λιμός, 'hunger', in the place of λαός 'people') of *Od.* 6.164, *i.e.* the scene in which Odysseus describes his visit to Delos on his way to Troy. In vv. 4–6, a conflation of two passages from the *Iliad* concerning horses, slightly changed, is used to describe loaves of bread.[49] This technique is attested elsewhere in the poem. In v. 18, for example, the spines of a sea-urchin are described with a formula (κάρη κομόωντας ἀκάνθαις, 'long spiny hair') which is a very minor adaptation of the expression that in Homeric poems formulaically qualifies the Achaeans (κάρη κομόωντας Ἀχαίους, cf. *e.g. Il.* 2.11).[50] In v. 47, the adjective ὀψοφόρους ('serving platters') is a comic calque of the epic ὑψόροφος ('high-roofed); in v. 60, the epic expression δύω κύνες ἀργοί ('two swift dogs', *Od.* 2.11) is transformed in δυώδεκα σάργοι ('twelve sargues').[51] The second technique crops up, for instance, in vv. 40-1, which describe hyperbolically the hugeness of the eel served at the banquet and exploits the contrast between epic expressions (γένος ἀγροτεράων, cf. *e.g. Il.* 2.852) and prosaic terms (παμμεγέθης):

[49] Cf. the description of Rhesus' horses in *Il.* 10.436–7 and the mares of the Trojan king Erichthonius in *Il.* 20.223).
[50] The same joke is attested in fr. 3. 2 in relation to the sow-thistle: cf. *e.g.* Olson and Sens (1999, 146).
[51] Cf. Olson and Sens (1999, 102–3, 109). Other examples of *calembours* are attested *e.g.* in vv. 81, 95, 114, 121. This technique occurs also in other fragments of the poem. The third verse of fr. 5 (ἄτριχας, οἰέτεας, λαγάνοις κατὰ νῶτον εἴσας), for instance, is a minimal parody of the Homeric description of Eumelus' horses (*Il.* 2.765 ὄτριχας, οἰέτεας, σταφύλῃ ἐπὶ νῶτον εἴσας): cf. Olson and Sens (1999, 148–9). Sometimes, the *calembours* of Matro give rise to verses which are unsatisfactory from a grammatical point of view: in these cases, the grammatical nonsense seems to derive from the parodist's attempt to modify an original epic formula and might be part of the parodist's game with the audience: cf. *e.g.* vv. 6 and 24, on which cf. *e.g.* Olson and Sens (1999, 78–9, 91). This is an interesting aspect which may be attested also in fragment of Hegemon, where the participle μετεωρίζοντες in v. 1, hardly acceptable from a syntactic perspective, may have been caused by the same compositive process.

ἐκ Κωπῶν, ὅθεν ἐγχέλεων γένος ἀγροτεράων,
παμμεγέθης, […]

She was from Copais, whence comes the race of wild eels,
and was very large; […]

Examples of the last technique are attested in vv. 27, 66–67 and 99. In v. 27, the adjective μιλτοπάρῃος ('carmine-cheeked'), often used in epic poems to describe ships (cf. *e.g. Il.* 2.637), is referred to the red mullet. In vv. 66–7, Matro amusingly describes the appearance of a lobster on the table:

[…] ἀστακὸς αὖτε λιλαίετο θωρήσσεσθαι
ἐν μακάρων δείπνοις· […]

[…] and a lobster too was eager to take a valiant part
in the banquets of the Blessed […].

In epic poems, the verb θωρήσσω is used with its primary value of 'to arm oneself for battle': the verb derives from θῶραξ ('corslet, breastplate'), a word that identified the part of the soldier's armour which covered the chest, but also the the thorax of the crustaceans. Playing on this ambiguity, Matro describes the lobster as a soldier who valiantly craves for battle.[52]

The pervasiveness of linguistic parody in classical *parōidia* is proved by the fact that it is widely exploited even in more poorly attested parodic poems. A fragment of Euboeus of Paros (*SH* 411) that reports a pure epic verse (*Il.* 18.534 = *Od.* 9.55), for instance, discloses the use of the third typology of linguistic parody:

βάλλον δ' ἀλλήλους χαλκήρεσιν ἐγχείῃσιν.
They hurled bronze-edged bowls at one another.

In this fragment, the word ἐγχείη, which in the epic model means 'spear, lance', is (in all probability) employed to refer to a bowl in light of its etymological meaning (cf.

[52] Cf. Olson and Sens (1999, 112), who points out additional comic nuances of the verb. The technique is attested in several other passages of the poem, such as vv. 15, 54, 63, 69, 73, 84, 106. Further potential puns are attested in frr. 1. 99 (cf. Olson and Sens 1999, 131) and 2. 1 (cf. Olson and Sens 1999, 145).

ἐγχέω, ‘to pour in’). Exactly like in the previous examples, this parodic fragment plays both on the re-contextualisation of an epic passage in a bathetic context and on the humorous reinterpretation of the etymology of the word. Two unattributed parodic fragments, on the other hand, display minimal parody, namely frr. adesp. parod. V and I Br.:

> […] ἔστειχε δ’ ἔχων ὑπὸ ποσσὶ χίμεθλα
> [...] and he went with chilblains under his feet
>
> τοῖς δ’ὁ κόλαξ πάμπρωτος ὑφαίνειν ἤρχετο μῶκον
>
> And for them the parasite first of all began to weave his mockery

In the former (attested in Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*, cf. *supra* pp. 51–2), we find a minimal parody of *Od.* 21.341 (ὑπὸ ποσσὶ πέδιλα), a passage in which Penelope affirms that she will donate some sandals to Odysseus — who is disguised as a beggar — should he be able to stretch his husband’s bow: in the parodic fragment, the epic sandals are humorously substituted with the chilblains of the unknown character described. In the latter (attested in Ath. 5,187a), we find the parody of the Iliadic passage in which Nestor offers advice to the Achaean chiefs (*Il*. 7.324, τοῖς δ’ ὁ γέρων πάμπρωτος ὑφαίνειν ἤρχετο μῆτιν). Humour lies here on the substitution of the Homeric words πάμπρωτος (‘first of all’) and μῆτιν (‘wisdom’) with κόλαξ (‘parasite’) and μῶκον (‘mockery’).

2.4 Earlier and contemporary parodies of epic

As I have explained in the introduction to this chapter, the aforementioned comic techniques which can be detected in classical epic parody are well attested already in earlier and contemporary poetry. In this section, I will list diachronically the occurrences of these techniques, which are indeed attested in Greek literature from Homer until the fourth century BC. The structure of this section follows that of the previous section: it is divided into three subsections, each devoted to one of the three technique already analysed with regard to epic parody.

2.4.1 Mock-epic descriptions

If we go back to the origins of Greek literature, it is easy to notice that the use of epic language for the depiction of low contents is already attested in Homer and Hesiod. In their poems, scholars have spotted several depictions of vulgar subjects.[53] Besides, in the examples that I will consider, epic language is not only used for the 'neutral' depiction of 'low' elements; it is in fact correlated with explicit comic purposes. In other terms, in the passages that I will analyse, the employment of epic language for the description of vulgar subjects is explicitly aimed at humour. The poems that I will examine are two Pseudo-Homeric poems, namely the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* and the *Margites*, the iambic poetry of Archilochus and Hipponax, some fragments of the Old and Middle Comedy and the gastronomic poem of Archestratus of Gela.

The *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*, a poem which relates the god's experiences during his first three days of life, showcases the mock descriptions of gods. The presence of parodic techniques in the hymn is not accidental: the hymn is indeed mostly comic, and its humour is mainly based on a comic reinterpretation of Homeric style and epic features.[54] Two examples support this point. The first is attested in v. 16, where Hermes' childish deeds (ἔργα) are ironically described as κλυτά, a pretentious adjective that in epic is used with the positive meaning of 'glorious'.[55] The second is at v. 23, where the cave of Maia is defined as ὑψηρεφέος ('high vaulted'), an adjective that, in epic poems, is often used in relation to δώματα and looks therefore quite inadequate for the description of a cavern.[56] Caricatures of epic heroes are attested also in the *Margites*, an archaic mock-epic poem attributed to Homer, which

[53] Cf. Bain (2007).
[54] Scholars have frequently highlighted the importance of laughter and of the humorous sides of the hymn: cf. *e.g.* Eitrem (1906, 248), Bielohlawek (1930, 203–9), Sikes (1940, 123), Szepes (1980), Otto (1987, 142, 315), Fernández Delgado (1990; 1998), Halliwell (1991; 2008, 100–3), Richardson (2007, 85; 2010, 19–20, 23–4), Bungard (2011), Furley (2011, 224–5), Vergados (2011, 87–98; 2013, 26–39).
[55] Cf. Vergados (2011, 94). The fact that a Homeric hymn is strongly characterised by humourous tones is very interesting for its theoretical implications, as it suggests that epic parodies did not only mock epic *res gestae*, but also their proemial introduction. If this hypothesis is correct, the humourous nature of the hymn endorses the 'proemial' interpretation of the poem of Hegemon (cf. *supra* p. 61).
[56] Cf. also v. 60, where Hermes defines Maia's cave as ἀγλαά ('splendid'). Cf. Rougier-Blanc (2005) and Vergados (2013, 27 n. 4).

narrates the story of its eponymous silly protagonist.[57] The humour of the *Margites* is predominantly based on the reuse of epic thematic and linguistic clichés. An example of this lies in the proper name of the protagonist of the poem, which, just like that of many epic characters, is a speaking name.[58] The name Margites derives from the semantic family of the word μάργος, whose root basically denotes the lack of self-control, *i.e.* the inability to control one's appetites and impulses.[59] Given the silliness of the protagonist — conspicuous in some of the extant fragrments and corroborated by secondary sources — the proper name of the protagonist surely reflects his intellectual and emotional flaws. Two fragments of the poem (frr. 2 and 3), both characterised by the comic reuse of epic language) specifically highlight his inept nature and demonstrate this comic side of his personality:

> πόλλ᾽ ἠπίστατο ἔργα, κακῶς δ᾽ ἠπίστατο πάντα.
>
> He knew a lot of things, but he knew them all badly
>
> τὸν δ᾽ οὔτ᾽ ἄρ σκαπτῆρα θεοὶ θέσαν οὔτ᾽ ἀροτῆρα
> οὔτ᾽ ἄλλως τι σοφόν· πάσης δ᾽ ἡμάρτανε τέχνης.
>
> The gods had made him neither a digger nor a plowman, nor skilled in any other way: he fell short at every craft.[60]

---

[57] Cf. *supra* pp. 22–3. The Greeks attributed several poems of both serious and comic nature to Homer: for an inclusive edition of Homeric and pseudo-Homeric poems, cf. Monro and Allen (1917–20) and *supra* p. 24 n. 18. The *Margites* was the most celebrated among these serio-comic works — almost completely lost and commonly called παίγνια — and it was believed to be authentically Homeric for a long time. Its date is uncertain and very debated, but the poem is generally considered archaic: cf. *e.g.* West (2003b, 227). It is possible, however, that its popular origins dated to the dawn of Greek literature. Several scholars (cf. *e.g.* Gostoli 2007, 9–11) have already underlined its parodic elements, but the importance of the poem itself for the constitution of the parodic genre has been overlooked.

[58] Playing with personal names is a technique that will be employed by Archilochus and Hipponax. Interestingly, the name recalls also other epic speaking names such as 'Thersites'. According to the *DELG* 423 the name of Thersites is antiphrastic as it stems from the root of the verb θάρσειν ('to be bold'). The interpretation, nonetheless, is not univocal: cf. *e.g.* Nagy (1980, 260–1). The similarities between the two characters are more than typological: indeed, Thersites (*Il.* 2.212–14) is described with an expression that closely recalls fr. 3 of the *Margites* and that might have been inspired its author.

[59] This is well proved by the expression οἶνος … μάργος (Hes. fr. 239 MW), where the adjective μάργος is referred to the wine that clouds the human mind. More specifically, in archaic time, the word has had several meanings, ranging from 'rage' (cf. *e.g. Il.* 5.882) to 'madness' (cf. *e.g. Od.* 16.421, 23.11), 'gluttony' (cf. *e.g. Od.* 18.2) and 'lust' (cf. *e.g.* Thgn. 581, 1271, Anacr. *PMG* 87, 2).

[60] The text and the translation of the fragments and of the *testimonia* are taken from West (2003b), while their numbering follows the edition of Gostoli (2007). For an analysis of the Homeric reminiscences, cf. *e.g.* Gostoli (2007). Another example of this linguistic humour is attested in fr. 11, a fragment that has been plausibly attributed to the poem and that (presumably) narrates the clumsy, sexual activity of Margites with his wife (cf. *e.g.* Gostoli 2007, 82–4): the language of the fragment is mostly Homeric and some expression are blatantly vulgar reuses of Homeric expressions.

Unlike the Homeric heroes, Margites is a blockhead and embodies the opposite of epic characters: his main peculiarities are his foolishness and his propensity to live and act uselessly and nonsensically, thus representing the antithesis of Greek heroes, especially the cunning and wise ones such as Odysseus and Nestor.[61]

Archilochus too employs epic clichés to ridicule people, experiences and places related to his own life.[62] The parody of people focuses on their physical description, which is ridicously built on that of epic characters. In fr. 117, for instance, Archilochus mocks the excessive attention paid by his friend Glaucus to his own fancy hairstyle by employing epic language and models:

τὸν κεροπλάστην ἄειδε Γλᾶυκον

Sing of Glaucus, who arranges his hair in horns

From a linguistic perspective, the verse recalls Homeric style through the epic verb ἀείδω, which — together with the word order of the verse — explicitly recalls the famous incipit of the *Iliad*.[63] From a thematic perspective, Archilochus mocks Glaucus by capitalising on the long hair, one of the most prototypical physical features of Homeric heroes: Glaucus, a vain dandy, is thus ironically compared to the epic heroes.[64] Sometimes Archilochus turns his parody on himself and on his group; in fr.

[61] For an analysis of the Homeric reminiscences, cf. *e.g.* Gostoli (2007).
[62] This element distinguishes Archilochus' epic parody from the Homeric (or pseudo-Homeric) one, *i.e.* the reference to *real* subjects is itself a development from Homeric *fictional* characters. This aspect influences also the intrinsic pragmatic value of the parodies themselves, since they are no longer just a literary *divertissement* aimed at the humorous reuse of epic clichés, but become actual poetical tools exploited to criticise external elements. The fragments of Archilochus follow the *constitutio textus* of West's *IEG*. The translations are by Gerber (1999).
[63] *Il.* 1.1 μῆνιν ἄειδε θεὰ Πηληϊάδεω Ἀχιλῆος | οὐλομένην. Lasserre and Bonnard (1968, 30) have suggested restoring an invocation to the Muse(s) at the end of the verse, just like in the incipit of the *Iliad*: the hypothesis is very speculative, but it would enhance the epic tone of the poem together with the name 'Glaucus' itself, a potential comic allusion of the homonymous Homeric hero.
[64] It has also been argued that the fragment might echo, more specifically, *Il.* 11.385, where Diomedes mocks Paris for his affected appearance and for his cowardice calling him κέρᾳ ἀγλαέ ('lovely in your locks'), a formula explained by scholiasts as a comment on his hairstyle: cf. Swift (2019, 302). Paris displays several comic traits that might have been taken up by later parodists.

101, he describes in epic tones the killing of seven people accomplished by the poet and one thousand of his companions.[65]

> ἑπτὰ γὰρ νεκρῶν πεσόντων, οὓς ἐμάρψαμεν ποσίν,
> χείλιοι φονῆές εἰμεν
>
> A thousand of us are the slayers of the seven who fell dead,
> overtaken by us in pursuit

The humour of the scene is based on the contrast between the petty accomplishment and the epic tones of its description, which furthermore recalls, in ridiculous tones, the Iliadic passage in which Achilles chases Hector who is running away from him.[66] Archilochus uses the same technique also for the description of places. Fr. 21, for instance, may be a witty portrayal of the island of Thasos based on the description of epic *loci amoeni*.[67] If so, parody would be based here on the reuse of comparison, a rhetorical figure frequently used in epic poems:[68]

> ἥδε δ' ὥστ' ὄνου ῥάχις
> ἕστηκεν ὕλης ἀγρίης ἐπιστεφής
>
> this (island) stands like the backbone
> of an ass, covered with a wild forest

A peculiar use of this technique by Archilochus consists in his ability to give epic-like speaking names to his characters: he often plays on the reuse of the endings -ίδης, -άδης of epic patronymics to characterise several of the personal names attested in his fragments; he also bends nominal composition — another typical means of word formation well attested in epic poems — to comic purposes.[69] This is clear in personal

[65] The plainly unbalanced numbers on the two sides — well highlighted at the beginning of the verses (ἑπτά and χείλιοι) — enhance the ludicrous description of this utterly anti-heroic engagement. Cf. *e.g.* Perotti (1983) and Swift (2019, 286–7).
[66] *Il.* 22.201 ὣς ὁ τὸν οὐ δύνατο μάρψαι ποσίν, οὐδ' ὃς ἀλύξαι. For the humour of the fragment, cf. Neri (2011, 189).
[67] This has been suggested *e.g.* by Del Grande (1959, 67). Another fragment that has been considered a parody of a *locus amoenus* is fr. 22.
[68] Cf. *e.g.* Russello (1993, 174). According to Swift (2019), the image of the donkey could be a parody of the epic convention of comparing heroes with noble animals.
[69] The onomastics of Archilochus has been widely researched at least from Welcker (1844, 2–6, 77–9). Many scholars have argued that the proper names attested in the poems of Archilochus are nothing but *nomina ficta*, while others argue that they refer to real people: cf. *e.g.* Nicolosi (2007, 142–6). Cf. *e.g.*

names such as Λεώφιλος (fr. 115), Χαρίλαος (fr. 168) and, most of all, Πασιφίλη (fr. 331).[70] The first two names play on the word λαός/λεώς ('people'), frequently attested in epic compounds.[71] The latter hides a sexual connotation based on the etymological meaning of *Pasiphile*, a name which literally means 'everybody's sweetheart', and which in the fragment presumably denotes a prostitute:[72]

> συκῆ πετραίη πολλὰς βόσκουσα κορώνας,
> εὐήθης ξείνων δέκτρια Πασιφίλη
>
> Like a fig tree on rocky ground that feeds many
> crows, good-natured Pasiphile takes on strangers

The bathetic use of epic-like patronymics and of nominal compositions is well attested also in the poems of Hipponax, who made much use of this comic technique to mock contemporary people through their ironic 'solemnisation'.[73] Fr. 177, for instance, exploits the word συκοτραγίδης ('fig-nibbler'), a compound that plays on the incongruous use of a solemn epic patronymic in relation to figs, which were considered cheap food.[74] Further compounds with comic connotations are attested in frr. 33 and 39:

Δωτάδης (frr. 57, 151), Κηρυκίδης (fr. 185. 1), Ἐρασμονίδης (fr. 168. 1), Ἀισιμίδης (fr. 14), Σελληΐδης (fr. 183), συκοτραγίδης (fr. 250).

[70] Another *Redender Name* of some interest for this research is Ἀμφιμεδώ, a personal name that may allude also to one of the Suitors, Ἀμφιμέδων: cf. *e.g.* Nicolosi (2007, 184 n. 104).

[71] Cf. Homeric characters like Pene*leus*, Age*leus*, Mene*laos*, *Lao*dochus, *Lao*chon. Χαρίλαος (a name that literally means 'loved by the people') is also humorously defined as Ἐρασμονίδης ('Darlingson'): cf. Gerber (1999, 183). The name Λεώφιλος might be moulded also on Homeric compounds such as ἀρηΐφιλος ('dear to Ares'), an epithet that in Homeric poems is commonly associated with warriors.

[72] Cf. *e.g.* Swift (2019, 431–3). The pun is supported by the ambiguity of the word συκῆ ('fig') — a fruit that in ancient Greek was used to denote female genitals. Some scholars believe that the expression συκῆ πετραίη would represent an allusion to Scylla, the sea monster attested in *Od.* 12.231 (Σκύλλην πετραίην ἥ μοι φέρε πῆμ'ἑταίροισιν): if so, we would be in front of a comic, derisive comparison between Scylla and the woman mentioned in the fragment. The name might amusingly evoke also some Homeric characters with similar names such as, for instance, Πασιθέη (*Il.* 14.276).

[73] For an insightful analysis of the linguistic features of Archilochus and Hipponax (compared to those of Callimachus), cf. Felisari (2017). In the light of the reading of some of his fragments, it has been interestingly argued (cf. Rosen 1990) that Hipponax may have used the Homeric depiction of Odysseus to build his comic *persona*. The same can be applied to Archilochus: cf. Seidensticker (1978). The text of the fragments of Hipponax in this work is that established by Degani (1991). The translations are by Gerber (1999).

[74] Cf. *e.g.* Degani (1973–4) and Bonanno (1980). A similar use of the word σῦκον in a parodic compound is attested in Cratin. fr. 69, where the word συκοπέδιλος ('fig-sandaled') is a blatant parody of the Homeric χρυσοπέδιλος. Given the common sexual connotation of the word 'fig' in ancient Greek, I would not exclude also a hidden sexual meaning in this fragment.

τίς ὀμφαλητόμος σε τὸν διοπλῆγα
ἔψησε κἀπέλουσεν ἀσκαρίζοντα;

What navel-snipper wiped and washed you
as you squirmed about, you crack-brained creature?

Μιμνῆ κατωμόχανε, μηκέτι γράψῃς
ὄφιν τριήρεος ἐν πολυζύγῳ τοίχῳ
ἀπ᾽ ἐμβόλου φεύγοντα πρὸς κυβερνήτην·
αὕτη γάρ ἐστι συμφορή τε καὶ κληδών,
νικύρτα καὶ σάβαννι, τῷ κυβερνήτῃ,
ἢν αὐτὸν ὄφις τὠντικνήμιον δάκῃ.

Mimnes, you who gape open all the way to the shoulders, don't paint again
on a trireme's many-benched side a serpent
that runs from the ram to the helmsman;
for this is a dangerous omen for the helmsman,
you slave born of a slave and . . .
if the serpent bites him on the shin!

Two notable compounds are attested in fr. 33: the first, ὀμφαλητόμος, plays on epic compounds formed with the second element -τόμος, such as σκυτοτόμος (cf. *e.g. Il*. 7.221) and ὑλοτόμος (cf. *e.g. Il*. 23.123); the second, διοπλῆγα, is based on the similar epic forms διογενής ('born from Zeus', *e.g. Il.* 1.337) and διοτρεφής ('cherished by Zeus', *e.g. Il.* 2.196).[75] Likewise, in the first line of fr. 39, the grandiloquent and sexually connoted κατωμόχανος (literally 'gaping all the way to the shoulders') is a compound based on the Homeric form κακομήχανος ('mischief-plotting', cf. *e.g. Il.* 6.344) and qualifies a contemptible individual called Mimnes.[76] Another parodic high-sounding compound with epic reminiscences and sexual connotations is attested by fr. 151. The only word of the fragment, ἀνασεισίφαλλος (literally 'cock-shaker'), is indeed a comic reinterpretation of the expression describing Athena in [Hes.] *Sc.* 344 αἰγιδ'ἀνασσείσασα ('who shakes out the aegis').[77] Hipponax's epic parody is also

[75] On this form cf. *e.g.* Degani (2007, 93). Homer employs also verbal compounds formed with the root of the verb τἐμνω: cf. *e.g.* (ἀπο)δειροτομέω ('cutting the throat', cf. *e.g. Il.* 18.336, 21.89). The compound διοπλῆγα literally means 'struck by Zeus' ('stunned', and therefore 'stupid'): on this form and further parallels, cf. *e.g.* Degani (1991, 47).

[76] Cf. Degani (1991, 55) for further Homeric *loci similes*. Another parodic compound is attested in fr. 20, which I will analyse in the last chapter of this thesis (cf. *infra* p. 187).

[77] The sexual content of the fragment is confirmed by our source, Eustathius (*Od.* 1.226, 153.29–30 Stallbaum), who explains that the term refers to a woman ὡς ἀνασείουσαι … τὸν φάλητα ὅς ἐστιν αἰδοῖον ἀνδρός ('that shakes out … the phallus, that is the male genital').

frequently based on the use of epic style to describe everyday items, as we can see in frr. 15 and 52.

> ἀκήρατον δὲ τὴν ἀπαρτίην ἔχει
>
> he has his utensils undamaged

> συκῆν μέλαιναν, ἀμπέλου κασιγνήτην
>
> the black fig-tree, sister of the vine

In the former, the stylistically high word ἀκήρατον, which in the Homeric poems always refers to precious objects (cf. *e.g. Il.* 15.498 and *Od.* 15.532), qualifies the 'low' word ἀπαρτίη ('utensils').[78] In the latter, two ordinary plants are amusingly described by means of a periphrasis usually employed in the description of epic genealogies.[79]

Incongruent, humorous reuses of epic diction are attested also in the Old and Middle Comedy, where we find the creation of pretentious adjectives through nominal composition and their exploitation for the description of trivial subjects.[80] Epicharmus, for instance, employs this technique mostly in relation to food, applying elevated epic language to the description of daily objects. In *The Marriage of Hebe* (frr. 39–64) and in the *Muses* (frr. 84–92), for instance, shellfish, fish and birds are qualified by ostentatious mock-epic adjectives such as ἀνδροφυκτίς (fr. 40. 11), ὀπισθόκεντρος, (fr. 58), μεγαλοχάσμων, ἐκτραπελόγαστρος (fr. 59), σπερματολόγος, (fr. 63), μακροκαμπυλαύχην (fr. 86).[81] In fr. 50, the epic adjective πετεηνός ('winged') —

[78] Cf. Sousa Medeiros (1961, 170) and Masson (1962, 166). Cf. also fr. 17, in which the epic and tragic verb κατακτείνω is used in relation to Boupalos and fr. 3, where the epic word ἄμμορος ('ill-starred') is followed by the (plausibly) Lydian word καύης ('priest').

[79] Cf. *e.g. Il.* 14.231. The fragment may hide a naughty meaning: cf. Degani (2007, 108).

[80] With some degree of simplification, it is possible to affirm that the parodic techniques employed in the Old and Middle Comedy correspond to those used by the classical parodists: comic reworking of epic language, application of epic language to vulgar subjects, farcical re-elaboration of epic episodes, characters and scenes.The only obvious exception is the breaking of scenic illusion, which depends on the theatrical nature of comedy. While in some fragments the target of epic parody is Homer (and the Homeric tradition) itself, in others Homer is merely an instrument of satire: cf. Magnelli (2004, 160), who (questionably) claims that the latter descends from the former. In this work, the comic fragments follow the edition of KA.

[81] For an analysis of Epicharmus' compounds, cf. Rodríguez-Noriega Guillén (1992) and Tosetti (2018, 52–3), who cites also fr. 80: in this fragment, a human character (presumably a *hetaira*) is described by means of the word εὔυμνος ('celebrated in many hymns'), a rare and elevated word which is always referred to Apollo (cf. *e.g. h.Ap*. 19).

which in epic tradition is used with reference to birds (cf. *e.g. Il.* 2.429, *Od.* 13.87, Hes. *Op.* 277) — ludicrously describes hens.[82] Cratinus, for instance exploits epic language also for the description of vulgar subjects in fr. 94, where the expression ἔστιν ἄκμων καὶ σφῦρα νεανίᾳ εὔτριχι πώλῳ ('the young colt with flowing mane has an anvil and hammer') has been commonly interpreted as a hexametric oracular riddle written with Homeric vocabulary and containing a sexual metaphor.[83]

Among the poets of Old Comedy, the reuse of epic language for the description of bathetic subjects is attested also in Aristophanes, whose plays are key evidence for the study of epic parody.[84] Even if (as far as we know) he did not compose any comedy with a Homeric subject, by employing linguistic and thematic epic parody for satirical purposes, Aristophanes follows the path of his predecessors.[85] Aristophanes frequently employs this technique to describe his characters. A very clear example is provided by Ar. *Ach.* vv. 959–70, in which Dicaeopolis refuses to sell the goods of his new private market to a servant of Lamachus. In vv. 964–8, the description of Lamachus is given with epic tones, and the employment of solemn Homeric formulas contrasts with his actual nature as a clumsy *miles gloriosus*:

> ΟΙΚ. ὁ δεινός, ὁ ταλαύρινος, ὃς τὴν Γοργόνα
> πάλλει κραδαίνων τρεῖς κατασκίους λόφους.
> ΔΙΚ. οὐκ ἂν μὰ Δί', εἰ δοίη γέ μοι τὴν ἀσπίδα·
> ἀλλ' ἐπὶ ταρίχει τοὺς λόφους κραδαινέτω·

[82] Cf. Rodríguez-Noriega Guillén (1996, 78), who mentions also frr. 128 and 237, two poems characterised by Homeric allusions.

[83] Cf. *e.g. Od.* 3.434 ἄκμονά τε σφῦράν τ' εὐποίητόν τε πυράγρην. For a fuller account of these parodies, cf. *e.g.* Amado Rodríguez (1994, 108–9) and Quaglia (2007, 253). Another example of the incongruent reuse of epic diction in Cratinus is fr. 258: cf. *infra* pp. 189–90.

[84] With the exception of some articles, inclusive studies of Homeric influences, allusions and reminiscences in the plays of Aristophanes are scarce, perhaps because they have been given for granted and erroneously overlooked: cf. *e.g.* Schlesinger (1936) and Macía Aparicio (1998; 2000).

[85] The evidence suggests that Aristophanes was more interested in satire than in parody and, most of all, in parody of tragedy rather than in parody of epic; after tragedy, however, epic is — not surprisingly — the easiest genre to detect in his works. Cf. Macía Aparicio (2000). My analysis of Aristophanes' epic parody is (freely) inspired by the categorisations formulated *e.g.* by Macía Aparicio (1998, 201; 2000, 213) and De Sario (2017, 96–105). Magnelli (2004, 160–5) has pointed out how Aristophanes employs Homer also as a 'dialectic tool' to unmask those who make factious misuse of epic expressions, exploiting Homeric authority for base, egoistic purposes. Even if this kind of Homeric usage is not directly relevant to the general argument of this thesis, it is related to the considerations on the widespread knowledge and usage of Homeric verses. I will not take into consideration the parodic jokes, based on epic plots and scenes, that Aristophanes makes on the tragic plays (such as, for instance, the parody of Aeschylus' *Myrmidons* and Euripides' *Telephos* in his plays): this is in fact *paratragōidia* rather than epic parody, since the target of Aristophanes (and, in general of contemporary comedians) is the tragic plays and not their epic model.

ἢν δ᾽ ἀπολιγαίνῃ, τοὺς ἀγορανόμους καλῶ.

(Slave) Lamachus the awesome, the tough as leather, who brandishes
the Gorgon as he shakes ‘three overshadowing crests’!
(Dicaeopolis) No deal, by Zeus, not even if he gave me his shield.
Let him shake his crests for salt fish.
And if he squawks about it, I’ll summon the commissioners.[86]

The adjective ταλαύρινος (‘tough as leather’) is attested in Homer in relation to Ares (cf. *e.g. Il.* 5.289); the verb πάλλει (‘shake’) and the noun [ἀπο]λιγαίνῃ (‘squawk’) are Homeric (cf. *e.g. Il.* 3.18–19 and 11.685 respectively). The same ironic use of parody crops up later in the play (vv. 1174–89), in a passage in which a messenger bangs on Lamachus’ door to report to his servants the comic ‘defeat’ of the general. The scene is described in vv. 1178–88:

ἀνὴρ τέτρωται χάρακι διαπηδῶν τάφρον,
καὶ τὸ σφυρὸν παλίνορρον ἐξεκόκκισεν,
καὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς κατέαγε περὶ λίθῳ πεσών,
καὶ Γοργόν᾽ ἐξήγειρεν ἐκ τῆς ἀσπίδος·
πτίλον δὲ τὸ μέγ᾽ <ὡς εἶδεν ἐκ κράνους> πεσὸν
πρὸς ταῖς πέτραισι δεινὸν ἐξηύδα μέλος·
‘ὦ κλεινὸν ὄμμα νῦν πανύστατόν σ᾽ ἰδὼν
λείπω, φάος γε τοὐμόν. οὐκέτ᾽ εἰμ᾽ ἐγώ.’
τοσαῦτα λέξας εἰς ὑδρορρόαν πεσὼν
ἀνίσταταί τε καὶ ξυναντᾷ δραπέταις
λῃστὰς ἐλαύνων καὶ κατασπέρχων δορί.

The man’s been wounded by a stake, from jumping over a trench,
and twisted his ankle backwards and dislocated it,
and fractured his head by falling on a stone,
and waked the sleeping Gorgon from his shield!
And <when he saw> the great plume had fallen <from his helmet>
against the rocks, he voiced a direful cry:
‘O brilliant visage, now for the last time do I behold you,
light of mine; I am no more!’
This he said when he fell into a drainage ditch;
then he stood up and faced his fleeing men,
as he pressed and routed the brigands with his spear.

[86] The translations of Aristophanes’ *Acharnians* are taken from Henderson (1998a).

The story — an explicit parody of a typical battle scene — is studded with epic allusions.[87] The word παλίνορρον ('with a backward wrench', v. 1179), for instance, is a Homeric hapax (*Il.* 3.33), scarcely attested in the classical period. Likewise, the expression ἐξήγειρεν ἐκ τῆς ἀσπίδος (*Od.* 4.730), as well as the words ἐξηύδα (*Il.*18.74), πανύστατόν (*e.g. Il.* 23.532) and ξυναντᾷ (*e.g. Il*. 17.134), are all epic military echoes employed here with explicit ironic purposes.[88]

An illustrative example of this technique in the Middle Comedy occurs in fr. 27 of Antiphanes, which belongs to the comedy *The Fisher-Women* and consists of a list of some people who are particulary fond of fish. In vv. 19–20, the speaker mentions a glutton named Cobius:[89]

> ἀνδρῶν δ᾽ ἄριστον Κωβιὸν πηδῶντ᾽ ἔτι
> πρὸς Πυθιονίκην τὴν καλὴν πέμψαι με δεῖ· |
>
> I've got to send the distinguished Cobius off to the lovely Pythionice while
> he's still flopping around;

In v. 19, the expression ἀνδρῶν δ᾽ ἄριστον (literally 'the best of men') has been taken as a parodic allusion to *Il*. 2.768, (ἀνδρῶν αὖ μέγ᾽ ἄριστος ἔην Τελαμώνιος Αἴας), a passage of the *Catalogue of Ships* in which Ajax Telamonius is described as the best fighter under the walls of Troy after Achilles. The incongruous attribution of an epic expression referred to one of the strongest Achaean fighters to the gluttonous Cobius was obviously meant to be humorous.

2.4.2 Caricature of epic

In the previous section of this chapter, I have pointed out that in the genre of classical epic parody it is possible to identify caricatures of different epic elements and patterns,

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[87] Olson (2002, 353) has pointed out that the words χαράκι ('stake') and τάφρον ('trench'), both attested in v. 1178, might be 'a reference to a fortification trench filled with sharpened stakes of the sort Homer's Achaians build around their camp': cf. *e.g. Il.* 7. 141–2. The same epic image is employed with comic outcomes in the *agon* between Aeschylus and Euripides in the *Frogs* (v. 928), where Euripides criticises the poetic pretentiousness of his rivals.

[88] The last verb substitutes *metri gratia* the regular Attic ἀπαντάω: this might prove Aristophanes' intention of employing Homeric expressions on purpose.

[89] The identity of Cobius and of the courtesan Pythionice (cf. v. 20) is known from some fragments of Alexis (cf. frr. 102, 143, 173). For a fuller analysis of the fragment, cf. *e.g.* Nesselrath (1997, 279–81).

namely characters, scenes, motifs and structures. As I will show in this section, similar caricatures are easily detected also in earlier and contemporary poems. Given the large number of poems that I will examine in this section, I have grouped them into three subcategories: caricatures of epic characters (gods and heroes), caricatures of epic motifs/scenes and caricatures of structural patterns.

2.4.2.1 Caricatures of epic characters

In Greek literature, parodies of gods and heroes are extremely common. As in most cultures, gods and heroes play a crucial role in Greek culture and poetry and embody everything that is most dignified and solemn. Nevertheless, it is well known that Greek gods and heroes are traditionally characterised also by human vices and are often bathetically portrayed.[90] Interestingly, the first Greek caricatures are attested in the Homeric poems. These poems display several caricatural elements, thus reinforcing the opinion that the comic side of epic prospered alongside the prevalently serious one and that the rhapsodic tradition was definitely acquainted with humorous subjects and techniques.[91] An interesting point is that Homeric caricatures do not only make fun of the most stereotypical features of the gods, but they also allude to specific scenes in the epic poems.

A well-known, illustrative example of these witty Homeric portrayals of gods is the depiction of Hephaestus as a cupbearer at the end of book 1 of the *Iliad*. In the Homeric poems (as well as in subsequent literature), Hephaestus is often comically portrayed for his caricatural divine nature. Even if he is a god, he does not share in the Olympic perfection: Hephaestus is lame, grotesque-looking and has been repudiated by his mother Hera.[92] This 'bipolarity', his simultaneous godly and un-godlike nature, drives Hephaestus to the fringes of the divine and human worlds and fosters his humorous depiction.[93] In book 1 of the *Iliad*, Zeus and Hera have a marital argument

[90] The playful Homeric representations of gods became a very prolific model for subsequent caricatures throughout Greek literature.
[91] As I have showed in the first chapter (cf. *supra* pp. 22–3), this is suggested by the passage of Aristotle's *Poetics* in which the philosopher chooses the *Margites* as example of a comic strand of epic parallel to the serious one.
[92] For additional 'anomalies' of Hephaestus within the divine world cf. *e.g.* Natale (2008).
[93] Cf. *e.g.* Natale (2008, 18–20).

that upsets the whole of Olympus (vv. 535–70).[94] Hephaestus then makes his appearance and invites Hera to calm down (vv. 573–83). In the subsequent lines, he assumes the role of cup-bearer and narrates the pitiful autobiographical episode in which his father Zeus hurled him down hurled him down from Olympus because he had defended his mother on the occasion of a similar strife between husband and wife (vv. 584–94). The narration of this (tragicomic) episode and the unusual task of Hephaestus in the role of cup-bearer amuses the gods, who eventually calm down and go to bed (vv. 595–600). In this scene, the humour derives not only from the autobiographical episode reported by Hephaestus — who is intrinsically comic due to his clumsy nature — but mostly from the incongruence between his nature and that of the actual divine cup-bearers, namely Hebe and Ganymede, two divinities who are stereotypically characterised by terrific beauty.[95] It should be also noticed that the squabble between Zeus and Hera in front of the assembly of the gods, lightly portrayed in this passage, represents a more precise, playful allusion to the quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon, which has taken place earlier in book 1.[96] Despite some basic differences, these two episodes display some structural similarities. First, in both passages a king (Agamemnon and Zeus) is challenged in front of an assembly because of the issues deriving from his problematic relationship with a woman: while Agamemnon wants Briseis as a reparation gift (*geras*) — thus provoking the wrath of Achilles — Zeus is seduced by Thetis who convinces him to accept her conditions, thus provoking Hera's jealousy.[97] Second, both quarrels are sparked by a request

[94] The argument is portrayed as a funny stereotypical marital squabble started by Hera's jealousy towards Thetis, who had previously tried to seduce Zeus to get what she wanted (cf. *e.g. Il.* 1.498–505).
[95] The fact that Hephaestus is lame (and therefore entirely unfit for this job) highlights the incongruence of his role as a cup-bearer.
[96] And, more generally, to the other 'quarrel-type' scenes attested in the Homeric poems (cf. *e.g. Il.* 4.336–418). The bathetic trial between Apollo and Hermes portrayed in the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*, from this perspective, is just another comic reformulation of this type-scene. For the significance of the end of *Iliad* 1 in the light of the whole book and of the poem at large, cf. *e.g.* Reinhardt (1961, 74 n. 15) Taplin (1992, 133–4) and Halliwell (2008, 58–69).
[97] The parallelism might be pushed a bit further, arguing that both the rage of Achilles and that of Hera are ultimately caused by the disregard of their prerogatives: Achilles wants his rightful share of the spoils, while Hera wishes to restate her marital appanage. Another similarity can be found in the furious reaction of both kings to the criticism directed against them. Just as Agamemnon rages against Achilles (*Il.* 1.172–87), Zeus angrily responds to his wife's accusations (*Il.* 1.560–7). As noticed by Meltzer (1990, 271), the argument between Zeus and Hera shares some similarities also with that of Odysseus and Thersites in book 2 of the *Iliad*. In both scenes, we find a rejection of an outcast character (respectively Hephaestus and Thersites) by the authority (Zeus and Odysseus) and a final softening of

concerning the petitioner's son or daughter: Chryses begs Agamemnon to give him back his daughter, while Thetis asks Zeus to honour her son Achilles. Interestingly, the corollary desired outcome of the request is the opposite: Chryses wishes the Greek to win the war if Agamemnon returns his daughter (*Il.* 1.17–21); Thetis, by contrast, asks Zeus to let the Trojans have the upper hand in the war until the prerogatives of her son are restored. Third, in both passages we find the arrival of a mediator (respectively Nestor and Hephaestus) who tries to reconcile the quarrellers. The speeches of Nestor and Hephaestus are similar in structure, both referring first to episodes of their past (*Il.* 1.259–73; 1.590–4) and then to the reaffirmation of the correct hierarchy between the parts involved (*Il.* 1.277–81; 1.577–81).[98] The parodic aspect of the quarrel type-scene at the end of book 1 is based on the contrast between the different tones of the two disputes, which ultimately lead to opposite consequences: while the discussion between Agamemnon and Achilles is not resolved satisfactorily for either party and leads to multiple deaths and tragedy, the squabble between Hera and Zeus ends in relaxed and comic tones, with the divine couple (and the assembly of the gods in general) peacefully going to bed thanks to the humorous intercession of Hephaestus (*Il.* 1.605–11).[99] The proemial *casus belli*, which initiates the plot, is therefore reformulated in divine terms, but the nonchalant, serene nature of the gods is not disrupted and clashes with the tragedy of human experience.

The same contrast between divine and human approach is attested in the caricatural depiction of the fighting between the gods which take place under the pleased gaze of Zeus in *Il.* 21.385–513. The frivolity of this scene puts it in sharp contrast with the intense preceding episode, namely Achilles' and Hephaestus' fight against the river-god Scamander.[100] What is amusing in the passage is the childish

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the situation which results in laughter. This seems to support the idea that this 'quarrel type-scene' was particularly open to playful reinterpretations.

[98] This is reinforced also by linguistic parallels: cf. *e.g. Il.* 1.281 (ἀλλ'ὅ γε φέρτερός ἐστιν) and *Il.* 1.581 (ὁ γὰρ πολὺ φέρτατός ἐστιν).

[99] The humour is generated by the contrast between the divine and the human condition (the former immortal, the latter mortal) and by the implications that such condition entails: cf. *e.g.* Slatkin (1992).

[100] In his commentary to the passage, Leaf (1902) defines the whole episode a 'ridiculous harlequinade'. It has been noticed (cf. *e.g.* Taplin 1992, 229–30, Richardson 1993, 86 and Halliwell 2008, 67) that the whole scene is framed by two moments in which Zeus bursts into laughter, that it is characterised by amusement throughout (vv. 408, 434, 491, 508), and that in the same passage we find the laughter of Athena (v. 408) and the smiles of Hera (vv. 434, 491). For a general overview of this episode in the light of the whole book and, more broadly, of the overall plot of the *Iliad* (including its relationship with the theomachies in book 5 and 20), cf. *e.g.* Richardson (1993, 51–2, 85–6). Some people have

reactions of the gods in response to their humiliation.[101] The humour derives from the frivolous portrayal of the predominant subject of the *Iliad*, war.

Another well-known passage of the *Iliad* that has been widely investigated for its comic overtones is the scene usually called Διὸς ἀπάτη ('Deception of Zeus', *Il.* 14.153–353), in which Hera cleverly makes herself beautiful, tricks Aphrodite into lending her love-charm, bribes Sleep to help her and finally persuades Zeus to sleep with her on the Mount Ida in order to distract him and let the Greeks take the upper hand in the Trojan War.[102] In this passage we have probably one of the most explicit and humorous examples of the frivolous depiction of divine couples in the epic: by being caricaturally portrayed as if they were horny and malicious humans, Hera and Zeus are deprived of their solemn standing.[103] The most illustrative part of the humour of this passage occurs within the dialogue between Zeus — turned on by sexual desire — and his seducing wife (vv. 294–351). The vv. 294–6, for instance, describe Zeus' reaction to the sight of Hera. The divine couple is playfully described here as a teenager couple who has managed to evade their parents' surveillance to enjoy erotic pleasures:

> ὡς δ᾽ ἴδεν, ὥς μιν ἔρως πυκινὰς φρένας ἀμφεκάλυψεν,
> οἷον ὅτε πρῶτόν περ ἐμισγέσθην φιλότητι,
> εἰς εὐνὴν φοιτῶντε, φίλους λήθοντε τοκῆας.
>
> and when he saw her desire was a mist about his close heart
> as much as on that time they first went to bed together
> and lay in love, and their dear parents knew nothing of it.

considered the scene spurious due to its ridiculous overtones, but, as some scholars have pointed out (cf. *e.g.* Halliwell 2017, 48), this approach is a way of sidestepping the cultural challenges that the Homeric texts display.

[101] Especially the humiliation of Ares (vv. 403–14) and Aphrodite (vv. 423–5) by Athena, and that of Artemis at the hands of Hera (vv. 489–96). Another comic episode occurs when Poseidon challenges Apollo to fight but the god cowardly flees the battle (cf. vv. 435–69). Richardson speaks of 'comic relief' (1993, 85) due to the contrast between the gods' squabbles and the tragedy of human death.

[102] The inappropriate behaviour of human and divine characters in the epic poems had already been censored by ancient scholarship: cf. *e.g.* Nünlist (2009, 267–81).

[103] This has prompted many scholars to consider this scene as an un-Homeric insertion: cf. *e.g.* Friedländer (1934), Dihle (1970, 180–7), Burkert (1983, 51–6), Golden (1989) and Janko (1994, 168). This argument, however, is ultimately negligible for the purpose of this research, which aims to pinpoint humorous elements in the epic tradition in general, not only in Homer. Two further considerations. First, the perception of epic by scholars as a purely serious matter is so pervasive that, anytime they find a frivolous passage, they tend to athetise it. Second, we find here the juxtaposition (in the same part of the *Iliad*) of serious and comic subject matter: it has been noticed that the episode has an important narrative role because it interrupts the seriousness of the previous passage.

In the lines 301–6, Hera refers to the destination of her (fake) trip, claiming that she is going to visit Oceanus and Tethys in order to stop their strife: the description of this other divine couple is equally caricatural, as they are depicted as a separated couple living under the same roof (vv. 304-6). Zeus' answer is comic: in order to convince Hera to stay and sleep with him, he awkwardly recounts his previous love stories with other goddesses to demonstrate that his desire for Hera is unparalled and that he is more eager to lie with her than with anyone else (vv. 313–28).[104] Hera impishly plays the part of the modest woman and makes a pretence of being concerned about the other gods' judgement (vv. 330–7). The episode ends with the couple sleeping together in a golden cloud purposedly created by Zeus (vv. 342–5, 350–1), a further comic element: the cloud-gatherer (νεφεληγερέτα) Zeus, who is able to control most of the metereological events, on this occasion exploits his powers for the bathetic purpose of getting some privacy. Just as in the passage at the end of book 1, which I have analysed before, the *Dios Apatē* plays with other epic scenes, parodically representing a comic re-elaboration of the so-called 'allurement scene'.[105] Three elements prove this. First, Hera's dressing up before her meeting with Zeus can be seen as a parody of the description of the arming of heroes who are about to go to battle.[106] Second, the comic *pointe* is given by the inversion of roles in the episode: the king of gods, the most 'efficient' and persistent divine seducer, is here ironically seduced by his own wife, who commonly plays the wife's permissive and reluctant part.[107] Third, Zeus' list of the goddesses he has seduced might well be a parody of epic catalogues.[108]

One of the most remarkable instances of Homeric humour occurs in book 8 of the *Odyssey* (vv. 266–369), where Demodocus, the bard of the Phaeacians, starts to sing of the adulterous liaison of Ares and Aphrodite to the detriment of her husband

[104] Leaf (1902, 62) has brilliantly called this passage 'Leporello list', based on the similarity between Zeus' conquests and those of the famous character from Mozart's *Don Giovanni*.
[105] For the 'allurement scene', cf. *e.g.* Forsyth (1979) and Sowa (1984, 68–72). This type of scene is the predominant poetical background of Archil. fr. 196a: cf. *e.g.* Swift (2019, 365–6). It is perhaps not accidental that this Iliadic passage displays similarities in both language and content with Paris' seduction of Helen in book 3, another light-hearted passage of the *Iliad*,: cf. *e.g.* Kirk (1985, 201) and Mastromarco (1997, 16–17).
[106] Cf. *e.g. Il.* 19.364–91, in which Achilles dons the new armour prepared by Hephaestus.
[107] For these points, cf. Seidensticker (1982, 56), Muth (1992, 28–39) and Mastromarco (1997, 13–14).
[108] To my knowledge, this specific comic reuse of epic catalogues has been curiously overlooked so far. For epic catalogues, cf. *e.g.* Gaertner (2001, with bibliography 299, n. 1) and Summons (2010).

Hephaestus.[109] The mythical plot is well known: Hephaestus learns from Helios of his wife's adultery and resolves to seek vengeance through his *technē*. He creates an unbreakable net, traps the lovers and calls the gods to witness the guilty couple. At the end of the episode, Poseidon diplomatically guarantees the payment of the damages caused by the adultery.[110] Apart from the bathetic depiction of gods that we have already noticed in other passages, this episode is interesting for three additional reasons. First, it is likely to be a sort of pastiche of Iliadic expressions taken from the comic passages already discussed in the previous pages.[111] If so, we would be in front of the most illustrative example of 'internal epic parody', *i.e.* the 'intertextual' reworking of sentences and passages belonging to the same poetic tradition. Second, if we consider the performance of Demodocus to be a reliable representation of archaic rhapsodic performances, the passage would prove that humorous rhapsodies could take place next to serious ones and that rhapsodes could easily shift from serious to humorous subjects according to the audience's inclination. Indeed, the tale of Ares and Aphrodite is narrated between two serious rhapsodies performed by Demodocus himself: earlier in book 8 of the *Odyssey*, Demodocus sings about the quarrel of Odysseus and Achilles, a serious topic which even makes Odysseus cry (vv. 62–92), while by the end of the same book Odysseus asks him to sing the story of the Trojan horse (vv. 486–520). This is an element that strengthens the original link between parody and rhapsody and which proves the rhapsodes' ability to shift from serious to

[109] The episode has proved to be quite problematic from a textual (and contextual) point of view: Homeric scholars have considered it for a long time a spurious 'poem in the poem', but today it is generally considered genuine: cf. *e.g.* Woodhouse (1930, 62), Burkert (1960, 4), Austin (1975, 170), Braswell (1982), Newton (1987), Alden (1997), Nagy (2010) Palmisciano (2012), Braccini (2014). The humour of the passage had been already noticed, in ancient times, by Eustathius (*Od.* 8.367, 1597.48 Stallbaum): cf. Giannini (1995, 1287–92). For specific research on the humour of this passage, cf. *e.g.* Burrows (1965, 36), Brown (1989, 283 n. 2), Natale (2008, 29–30) and Halliwell (2008, 77–86).

[110] This is comic too: gods discuss divorce penalties just like normal people. The humour of the scene is highlighted also by internal meta-poetical clues. When Hephaestus invites the Olympians to see the shameful actions of the adulterers, he defines them as γελαστά ('ridiculous') and the gods laugh at the embarrassing situation (cf. vv. 307–8, 326–7). Later in the scene, Hermes makes a joke about the situation and makes the Olympian laugh again (vv. 334–43). The comic nature of the scene is confirmed also by the joyful reaction of the Phaeacians and Odysseus to Demodocus' rhapsody (vv. 367–9).

[111] This is the famous hypothesis of Burkert (1960), who has underlined, in the passage of the *Odyssey*, some linguistic parallels with the Iliadic episodes of the argument between Zeus and Hera and the intervention of Hephaestus in book 1, of the *Dios apatē* in book 14, and of the caricatural theomachy in book 21. From this hypothesis, Burkert has drawn further considerations on Homeric divine humour, which have however been denied by Halliwell (2017). If Burkert's hypothesis is correct, one can speculate that rhapsodes, already in archaic time, were aware of the humorous episodes contained in the epic poems and were able to select accurately their material for the creation of new comic episodes.

comic topics while using the same language.[112] Third, scholars have pointed out that the tale of Ares and Aphrodite presumably has its roots in popular culture.[113] This point reinforces the connection between Greek epic parody and folklore, a crucial element that will be investigated more accurately in the next chapter of this thesis.[114]

Epic caricatures are frequently related to the figure to Hermes, as demonstrated by the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* and by some fragments of Hipponax. Although some 'lighter' elements are attested also in other Homeric hymns, the *Hymn to Hermes* is — as I have already demonstrated — pervasively permeated by humour, which mostly arises from two elements: the comic depiction of the new-born Hermes and of his divine family, described as an ordinary one.[115] The ludicrous portrayal of the divine family, which characterises the entire poem, already begins in the opening of the hymn (vv. 5–9), where the birth of Hermes from an extramarital affair between Zeus and Maia is described as happening when Hera falls asleep and Zeus lies undisturbed with the nymph.[116]

> […] μακάρων δὲ θεῶν ἠλεύαθ' ὅμιλον
> ἄντρον ἔσω ναίουσα παλίσκιον, ἔνθα Κρονίων
> νύμφῃ ἐϋπλοκάμῳ μισγέσκετο νυκτὸς ἀμολγῷ,
> ὄφρα κατὰ γλυκὺς ὕπνος ἔχοι λευκώλενον Ἥρην,
> λήθων ἀθανάτους τε θεοὺς θνητούς τ' ἀνθρώπους.
>
> [...] modest one, who shunned the company of the blessed gods,
> dwelling within a cave's shadow. There the son of Kronos
> used to unite with the nymph of lovely tresses in the depth of the night,
> so long as sweet sleep held white-armed Hera fast,
> and neither immortal gods nor mortal men knew of it.

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[112] Some scholars (cf. *e.g.* Konstantakos 2012, 32) have underlined how the episode, despite its anomalous nature, ultimately fits in the plot of the *Odyssey*: interestingly, this might prove that originally independent parodies could be easily 're-shaped' to fit in serious epic plots, thus implying a fusion between serious and comic rhapsodies in the constitution of the Homeric corpus.

[113] The topic has raised much discussion: cf. *e.g.* Alden (1997; 2017, 200–21), Konstantakos (2012), Braccini (2014, 42–3), who have analysed this passage from this perspective and have compared this plot pattern to the folkloristic tradition of several different cultures.

[114] As I will point out in more detail later, this connection is mostly due to the popularity of folk traditions — which were easily understood by a vast audience — and to the 'lower' status of popular culture, whose subjects and features could be employed to foster the contrast with epic.

[115] Humorous portrayals of Hermes are well attested in the epic, iambic, lyric and theatrical tradition: cf. *e.g.* Bowie (1993, 138–42), Nesselrath (2010, 147–9), Vergados (2011, 88–94; 2013, 65–86) and Nobili (2011, 217–24). The last part of the hymn, which recounts the reconciliation of Apollo and Hermes, is characterised by more serious tones.

[116] The texts of the hymn are taken from Vergados (2013). Translations are taken from West (2003b).

Another exemplary instance of the bathetic treatment of the divine family is illustrated in vv. 155–6 by the relationship between Hermes and his mother Maia. Here, the nymph reproaches her son because he has come back home too late, acting like a mother annoyed at the pranks of his son, rather than as a seraphic goddess.[117] As I have mentioned, explicit caricatures of Hermes are attested also in the fragments of Hipponax.[118] In his fr. 2, for instance, the poet gives a derisive description of the god by highlighting his traditional 'stealing attitude':

> Ἑρμῆ κυνάγχα, Μηιονιστὶ Κανδαῦλα,
> φωρῶν ἑταῖρε, δεῦρό μοι σκαπαρδεῦσαι.
>
> Hermes, dog throttler, Candaules in Maeonian,
> companion of thieves, come give me a hand(?).

Hipponax turns against other gods with the same spirit. In fr. 44, for instance, the god Plutus (Wealth) is openly criticised for his stinginess:

> ἐμοὶ δὲ Πλοῦτος—ἔστι γὰρ λίην τυφλός—
> ἐς τῳκί᾽ ἐλθὼν οὐδάμ᾽ εἶπεν "Ἱππῶναξ,
> δίδωμί τοι μνέας ἀργύρου τριήκοντα
> καὶ πόλλ᾽ ἔτ᾽ ἄλλα·" δείλαιος γὰρ τὰς φρένας.
>
> Wealth—for he is exceedingly blind—
> never came into my house and said: "Hipponax,
> I'm giving you 30 minas of silver
> and much else besides." For he has a coward's mind.

It has correctly been noticed that in this fragment Plutus is abused not only for his stereotypical blindness, but also for his pusillanimity (cf. v. 4): Hipponax is here raging against the god because they have hanging matters to settle — as he implicitly seems

[117] Τίπτε σύ, ποικιλομῆτα, πόθεν τόδε νυκτὸς ἐν ὥρηι ἔρχηι, | ἀναιδείην ἐπιειμένε; [...] ('What are you up to, you sly thing, where have you been in the night-time, with shamelessness as your cloak [...]?').
[118] A sort of caricature may be attested also in Archil. fr. 108, in which the poet invokes Hephaestus and asks him 'to be his ally'. As we ignore the context of the poem, it is impossible to draw any conclusive interpretation of the fragment: yet, some lexical nuances have prompted scholars to set the fragment in an erotic context (cf. Russello 1993, 115). If this is correct, the invocation to Hephaestus by the narrator in relation to a love affair would surely have been comic, given that in the mythological tradition he was betrayed by his wife (cf. *supra* pp. 83–5).

to suggest — and because Plutus cowardly does not want to enter in the poet's house, in order to avoid to to answer for his misbehaviour.[119]

Caricature characterises also hilarious depictions of Homeric heroes: although they are stereotypically endowed with exceptional qualities, some of them do not follow this traditional pattern and stand out againt more dignified ones by sometimes displaying blatantly humorous characteristics. Scholars, for instance, have long emphasised the peculiar portrayal of Paris in the Homeric poems, a character who often fits incongruously into the Homeric world and whose shamelessness gives rise to humorous episodes.[120] Despite his good fighting abilities, Paris does not apply himself assiduously in the defence of Troy, thus embodying — on several occasions — the opposite of the typical Homeric hero, who is firmly bound to his moral duties.[121] His intrinsic ridiculousness is underlined by his vain and effeminate behaviour, which is criticised or ridiculed throughout the poem. In *Il.* 3.15–20, for instance, Paris plays the part of the *miles gloriosus*: first, he stands 'godlike' (θεοειδής, v. 16) against the Trojan army and cockily challenges the strongest enemies to fight him, then, when Menelaus accepts the challenge, he cowardly hides himself among his companions (*Il.* 3.30–7).[122] Paris' cowardice on this occasion triggers the rage of his elder brother, Hector (vv. 39–57), who reproaches his pusillanimity (vv. 39–45) and gives a pitiless description of him (vv. 43–5). The defence offered by Paris against Hector's accusations (vv. 59–75), however, is even more ridiculous than his actions because Paris, behaving like a spoiled boy, explains that one cannot reject the divine gifts of Aphrodite (vv. 63–6) and that he is going to fight only to do Hector's bidding (v. 67). As a result of this verbal exchange with his brother, Paris resolves to fight against

[119] Cf. Degani (2007, 103–4) for a fuller commentary on the fragment.
[120] See *e.g.* Hess (1866, 38), Clarke (1969, 247) and Golden (1990). Clarke recalls also the passage in book 7, where Paris is said to have stolen not only Menelaus's wife, but also some of his silverware: this exposes his extreme pettiness. This does not mean that Paris is *always* portrayed humorously, but he is definitely characterised by comic nuances more than the other heros fighting in Troy. His effortless attempt to fight without being able to do it might also have a humorous purpose. Another scene that belongs to this section — Ajax's falling into the dung during the funerals for the death of Patroclus in book 24 of the *Iliad* — will be taken into consideration in the subsquent chapter, which focuses on the popular background of epic parody. The considerations that I will make here, however, are valid also for the interpretation of that passage.
[121] Cf. *e.g.* Hector's words in *Il.* 6. 522–3.
[122] The dandyish demeanor of Paris also clashes in a war-focused poem like the *Iliad*: this is evident in *Il.* 6.313–17, 321–2, where Hector finds him in his wonderful house polishing his weapons as if they were jewels. On this point, cf. also Plebe (1956, 29).

Menelaus, but when things turn out badly for him, Aphrodite takes him out of the battlefield and brings him back to his fragrant bedchamber (vv. 380–2). Here, when Helen berates him for his spinelessness (vv. 428–37), he cooly replies with relativistic tones that victory is temporary (vv. 439–40) and convinces her to sleep with him. Overall, Paris cannot be taken seriously as a hero because he takes nothing seriously himself: he does not partake in the tragic dichotomy, inherent to the epic universe, on account of which heroes need to make critical choices.[123] Procrastination is his chief value, and his phlegmatic fatalism makes him believe that it makes no sense to worry about anything.[124] Paris' limits are extremely striking also because he is often mentioned next to Hector, who acts as his serious counterpart.[125] The dialogues between the two brothers are comic because there is a huge gap between their motivations and because Paris eventually resigns himself to fight just to stop his brother's patronising telling-off. At the end of book 6 of the *Iliad* (vv. 506–29), after the heart-breaking farewell of Hector to Andromache, Paris makes his appearance (humorously compared to a stallion, vv. 506–11) and naïvely admits his delay in joining the fight (vv. 517–19): the inappropriate timing of his arrival, highlighting the contrast between his priorities and those of his elder brother, enhances his shameless depiction as a spoiled boy. In *Il.* 13.774–80, too, Paris' defence against Hector's accusations sounds like a familiar, bathetic squabble where the family black-sheep claims for more respect.

The Homeric poems do not offer only caricatures of heroes. In fact, they display also several depictions of secondary characters who, for their anti-heroic features, seem to represent an antiphrastic parodic depiction of serious heroes. Because of his physical and 'moral' flaws, the Achaean soldier Thersites (*Il.* 2, 211–71), for instance, embodies the opposite of what a typical Homeric hero should be. At the beginning of book 2 of the *Iliad*, Zeus sends a deceptive dream to visit Agamemnon in order to persuade him to attack the city of Troy. Before engaging the enemy, though,

[123] Clarke (1969, 247).
[124] Cf. *e.g. Il.* 6. 313–41: when Hector looks for Paris (who is lying on his bed with Helen, whilst playing with his armour) and tries to convince him to get up (vv. 327–31), Paris' answer (vv. 333–41) demonstrates all his disinterest, his nihilism and his immaturity in military matters.
[125] It is not a coincidence, perhaps, that the same contrast between two brothers (the prankster Hermes and his elder brother Apollo) occurs in the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* another earlier analogue of epic parody.

the Achaean chief decides to test his soldiers' spirits by pretending to order a retreat and to allow his men to leave the battlefield. The soldiers, tricked by this ruse, make for the ships, until Odysseus unveils the deceit and convince them to stay. At this point, a soldier of the Achaean army, Thersites, makes his appearance (v. 212–64) and reviles Agamemnon for his greed and his arrogance, and his companions for their pusillanimity (vv. 265–77).[126] The description of Thersites is unkind both from a physical and from a 'moral' perspective (vv. 211–19).

> Ἄλλοι μέν ῥ' ἕζοντο, ἐρήτυθεν δὲ καθ' ἕδρας·
> Θερσίτης δ' ἔτι μοῦνος ἀμετροεπὴς ἐκολῴα,
> ὃς ἔπεα φρεσὶν ἧσιν ἄκοσμά τε πολλά τε ἤδη
> μάψ, ἀτὰρ οὐ κατὰ κόσμον, ἐριζέμεναι βασιλεῦσιν,
> ἀλλ' ὅ τι οἱ εἴσαιτο γελοίϊον Ἀργείοισιν
> ἔμμεναι· αἴσχιστος δὲ ἀνὴρ ὑπὸ Ἴλιον ἦλθε·
> φολκὸς ἔην, χωλὸς δ' ἕτερον πόδα· τὼ δέ οἱ ὤμω
> κυρτὼ ἐπὶ στῆθος συνοχωκότε· αὐτὰρ ὕπερθε
> φοξὸς ἔην κεφαλήν, ψεδνὴ δ' ἐπενήνοθε λάχνη.
>
> Now the rest had sat down, and were orderly in their places,
> but one man, Thersites of the endless speech, still scolded,
> who knew within his head many words, but disorderly;
> vain, and without decency, to quarrel with the princes
> with any word he thought might be amusing to the Argives.
> This was the ugliest man who came beneath Ilion. He was
> bandy-legged and went lame of one foot, with shoulders
> stooped and drawn together over his chest, and above this
> his skull went up to a point with the wool grown sparsely upon it.

After his speech, Thersites is given a sound beating by Odysseus and his cries provoke the laughter of his companions (v. 270). Just as Hephaestus embodies the opposite of the divine qualities, Thersites represents the antithesis of the Homeric heroes.[127] A similar episode occurs at the beginning of book 18 of the *Odyssey* (vv. 1–107).

[126] For the mixture of tragic and comic in the episode, cf. Golden (1990) and Meltzer (1990). Further bibliography *e.g.* in Lowry (1991) and Rosen (2007).

[127] The bibliography on Thersites is wide because of the sociological, political and literary implications of this character: cf. *e.g.* Lowry (1991, 94–5), Perotti (1999, 71), Spina (2001), Marks (2005), Jouanno (2005). Thersites is in fact a good orator, but the content and purpose of his speech — complaining about the chiefs to get the companions' attention — goes against the values enshrined by the *Iliad*; accordingly, he personifies the reverse of skilful heroic orators such as Nestor and Odysseus: it is not thus a coincidence that Homer highlights his unpleasant voice a few times in the passage (vv. 212, 222, 224). As for Thersites as γελωτοποιός ('entertainer'), according to a definition by Plato (*R.* 10.620c), cf. *e.g.* Halliwell (1991, 281).

Odysseus has just returned to Ithaca: disguised as a beggar, he enters his palace with the goal of taking his revenge against the Pretenders. One of the first characters he encounters in the palace is the beggar Irus. What is interesting in this passage is the description of Irus, who is portrayed as a boundless glutton (vv. 2–3) with a hulking but strengthless build (vv. 3–4). Just like Thersites, Irus is exceedingly presumptuous: he abuses Odysseus and challenges him to a brawl (vv. 26–31), but in the end he shamefully panics when he sees the hero invigorated by Athena (vv. 75–7). Ultimately, he is punched and abused by Odysseus (vv. 90–107), and mocked by the suitors, who laugh exactly like the Achaean army in the episode of Thersites (vv. 99–100). Another humorous depiction of caricatural characters is attested in the curious death of Elpenor, one of Odysseus' companions, reported in two passages of the *Odyssey* (10.551–60, 11.51–80).[128] Odysseus gathers his companions in order to depart from the house of Circes; Elpenor, still half-drunk, rushes to reach the others but falls down from the roof he was sleeping on and breaks his neckbone (vv. 552–60). The episode is comic because Elpenor dies a silly death: instead of losing his life heroically during the glorious adventures of Odysseus, he dies for his clumsiness.[129]

The caricature of epic heroes (mostly Odysseus) is incredibly well attested also in the plays of the Old Comedy, several of which have a Homeric plot.[130] The majority of such comic distortions is attested in the mythological comedies of Epicharmus, Cratinus and others comedians, who frequently exploited the plot, the scenes and the

[128] It is not by chance that also this passage, as other comic ones, has been considered a spurious, late addition aimed at linking the story of Circe to that of the visit to Hades. For a general overview of these positions, cf. Heubeck and Hoekstra (1989, 73–4), Deneen (2000, 241) and Gazis (2018, 102–8).

[129] The inept, unheroic nature of Elpenor is proved also by the short description that Odysseus makes of him (vv. 552–3): Ἐλπήνωρ δέ τις ἔσκε νεώτατος, οὔτε τι λίην | ἄλκιμος ἐν πολέμῳ οὔτε φρεσὶν ᾗσιν ἀρηρώς ('the youngest of all, not over valiant in war nor sound of understanding'). The same scene is retold in the first person by Elpenor himself, dead, in his dialogue with Odysseus in Hades (*Od.* 11.51–80). Here, Odysseus awkwardly justifies himself by saying πόνος ἄλλος ἔπειγε ('another task was then urging us on', v. 54) and asks a (debated) question which, at first sight, surely sounds sarcastic: 'Elpenor, how did you come beneath the murky darkness? You coming on foot have outstripped me in my black ship' (vv. 57–8, Ἐλπῆνορ, πῶς ἦλθες ὑπὸ ζόφον ἠερόεντα; ἔφθης πεζὸς ἰὼν ἢ ἐγὼ σὺν νηὶ μελαίνῃ): cf. Gazis (2008, 104 n. 21) and Pache (1999). Cf. Mitchell for vase depictions of this episode (2009, 15).

[130] The caricature of epic heroes is more attested in the theatrical poems than in epic lyric. This depends on two reasons. First, since we ignore the identity of most of the characters mentioned in the lyric poems examined, it is hard to say whether the references actually describe epic characters or not. In other terms, some caricatural portraits attested in Greek lyric *may* be referred to epic characters, but our ignorance of the identity of the characters described prevents us from decisive conclusions. Second, theatrical genres were more inclined to the description of epic characters thanks to their 'staged' nature: epic characters could be the protagonist of entire comedies and could be caricaturally portrayed also in the mise-en-scène.

characters of the *Odyssey* in their comedies. As I have showed in the introduction (cf. *supra* pp. 13–16), the adventures of Odysseus were the most fertile model for parodic reworkings, whereas we have no direct evidence of plays entirely based on the plot of the *Iliad*. This is not coincidental: Odysseus was a favourite character for parodies and his saga had always been a persistent, fertile model for playful adaptations. In addition, the analysis of the sources confirms that some episodes of the *Odyssey* were definitely more employed than others. The episodes of Odysseus' meeting with Polyphemus and with the Sirens, for example, were predominantly performed: their exotic and 'monstrous' nature surely fostered their charm and popularity across Greek society, thus making them a privileged subject for theatrical performances.[131] The episode of the Cyclops, in particular, was a common topic in fifth-century theatre, Satyr Plays and dithyrambs.[132]

As fas as we know, the first poet who composed plays with Homeric subjects was Epicharmus. Four of his comedies (at least) were based on episodes taken from the *Odyssey*: the *Odysseus deserter*, the *Odysseus shipwrecked*, the *Cyclops* and the *Sirens*.[133] In these plays, the poet gives an unconventional, comic depiction of the epic hero. In his *Odysseus deserter* (frr. 97–103), for instance, Epicharmus reworks two Homeric passages — the Iliadic *Dolōneia* (10.204–457) and the episode in which Odysseus is sent to Troy in a spy mission disguised as a beggar but is recognised by

[131] Mastromarco (1998, 10) has also pointed out how three specific moments of the Homeric episode of the meeting with the Cyclops are those mostly represented: the wine offering, the blinding of Polyphemus with a stake, the escape of Odysseus with his companions.

[132] The episode of the Cyclops was staged also in Satyr Plays (Euripides and Aristias, cf. 162–5) and dithyrambs (cf. *e.g.* Philoxenus of Cythera): cf. *e.g.* Casolari (2003, 127–34). For the fortune of the depiction of Polyphemus and the Cyclops in ancient literature (especially in comedy), cf. *e.g.* the bibliography quoted by Mastromarco (1998), Imperio (1998, 205), Casolari (2003, 143–68), Olson (2014). The episode was often portrayed also in the figurative arts: cf. *e.g.* Fellmann (1972, 79–100).

[133] Other Homeric references are attested in the corpus of Epicharmus, who composed two additional plays that might have been related to the plot of the Homeric poems, called respectively *Antenor* (fr. 8) and *Trojans* (frr. 128–9): cf. *e.g.* Rodríguez-Noriega Guillén (1996, 18, 128–9; 1998, 79), Olson (2007, 47) and Tosetti (2018, 105). The former might have focused on the embassy of Antenor with Odysseus and Menelaus narrated in *Il.* 7.347–53. Two additional fragments (frr. 106–7) belong to another comedy by Epicharmus in which Odysseus presumably played a relevant part, but their fragmentary nature precludes their undisputed attribution to one of the abovementioned 'Odyssiac' comedies (cf. *e.g.* Tosetti 2018, 500–3). Odysseus was probably a character also in the *Philoctetes* (frr. 131–2): cf. Rodríguez-Noriega Guillén (1996, 129–31) and Olson (2007, 47). In the pseudo-epicharmic fr. 278 we find a reference to Eumaeus, the swineherd of *Odysseus*: this suggests an Odyssiac model (cf. Rodríguez-Noriega Guillén 1996, 93–4). Other (approximately) contemporary plays based on the model of the *Odyssey* are Phormias' *Alcinous* and *The Sack of Troy* [or *The Horse*], and Dinolochus' *Circe* [or *Odysseus*], but nothing from these poems has survived. For a general overview of *Mythentravestie* in Epicharmus and Doric comedy, cf. Casolari (2003, 47–59).

Helen (*Od*. 4.240–258) — to portray Odysseus as a pusillanimous deserter.[134] In the *Odysseus shipwrecked* (frr. 104–5), Epicharmus seems to have comically reworked the Homeric scenes of Odysseus' shipwrecks, while in the *Cyclops* (frr. 70–2) he staged a comic version of the famous meeting of Odysseus with Polyphemus in *Od.* 9.216–535.[135] In the *Sirens* (frr. 121–2), Epicharmus reformulates the episode in which Odysseus meets the Sirens (*Od.* 12.166–200): if the common interpretation of the sources is correct, in the comedy the Sirens try to lure Odysseus and his companions by singing a long list of food and dishes.[136] Epicharmus is not the only poet who exploited Homeric models for comic purposes. Cratinus, for instance, composed a comedy entitled *Odysseus*, which survives only in fifteen fragments (frr. 143–57).[137] Just like Epicharmus' *Cyclops*, the comedy is a hilarious reworking of the well-known episode of the *Odyssey* in which Odysseus meets Polyphemus: in Cratinus' play, however, Polyphemus is portrayed not as a daunting monster but as a placid *mageiros* ('cook').[138] Theopompus composed three comedies probably based on the model of the *Odyssey*: the *Odysseus* (frr. 34–7), the *Penelope* (frr. 48–50) and the *Sirens* (frr. 51–4).[139] A play called *Sirens* was composed also by Nicophontes (frr. 20–22): like

[134] For a more precise description of the parodic passages and some bibliography on the poem, cf. *e.g.* Olson (2007, 47–52), Kerkhof (2001) and Tosetti (2018). Cf. also Cassio (2002, 79) and Willi (2008, 184 n. 69) for valuable linguistic pointers.

[135] According to Rodríguez-Noriega Guillén (1996, 91) the *Odysseus Shipwrecked* recounted Odysseus' arrival on the island of the Phaeacians after his shipwreck. Tosetti (2018, 496–7), by contrast, argues that it is more likely to be an allusion to the shipwreck in front of the island of Ogygia; she correctly maintains, at any rate, that Epicharmus may have just taken inspiration from the general topos of the shipwreck, rather than from a specific episode. For an interpretation of the plot and a commentary, cf. *e.g.* Olson (2007, 52–5) and Tosetti (2018, 354–5).

[136] It is not coincidental that in this comedy we find the only certain hexametric verse attested in the corpus of Epicharmus (cf. *infra* p. 156). Gastronomic subjects are prominently attested in Old Comedy: this is not only a reflection of the relevant role which this topic surely must have played in Greek comedy, but also partly a distortion due to the nature of the source that trasmits many of the extant fragments, Athenaeus' *Deipnosophistae*.

[137] The comedy is dated to around 440–436 BC. A general overview of the play in Casolari (2003, 61–77). Interesting considerations on the structure of the play are proposed by Ornaghi (2004b).

[138] This innovation may have been used later by Callias and Euripides in their reformulations of the Homeric passage: cf. Mastromarco (1998, 34–6). Another allusion to Odysseus' saga is attested in a play by Callias (which has been attributed also to Diocles), the *Cyclops* (frr. 5–13, 434 BC). The fragments of this play suggest that Polyphemus was portrayed as a glutton (cf. *e.g.* Katsouris 1997, 3), but the topic does not seem to have been connected with the epic episode: cf. Bagordo (2014) and Imperio (1998, 204–17). Cf. also the *Menelaus* by Plato Comicus (frr. 76–9) and Strattis' *Philoctetes* (frr. 44–5): the fragmentary condition of the plays precludes any valuable consideration. For the evidence of Strattis and his fragments, cf. Orth (2009) and Fiorentini (2017); for the fragments of Plato Comicus cf. *e.g.* Rosen (1995).

[139] For an overview of the mythological plays of Theopompus, cf. Sanchis Llopis (2002). Fr. 34 (an explicit allusion to *Od.* 19.232–3) is not inherently comic but shows an interesting example of the

the plays of Epicharmus and Theopompus, it has been suggested that the comedy was a parody of the Homeric episode and played on culinary *topoi*.[140] Philillus composed a play called *The Laundresses or Nausicaa*. Despite the very fragmentary condition of the play — only one fragment has survived (fr. 8) — the name of the comedy suggests that it must have been a comic re-elaboration of the meeting between Odysseus and Nausicaa in book 6 of the *Odyssey*, where Nausicaa goes to the river to wash her clothes with her servants (*Od.* 6.25–109).[141]

In Aristophanes, the caricature of epic plots and characters is accomplished not only through verbal elements, but also through scenic ones: in other terms, it is not merely based on what the audience would hear, but also on what they would see on the stage.[142] In Ar. *V.* 179–86, Philocleon wants to go to the law court at all costs; to accomplish this, he hides himself under the belly of a donkey, but his son Loathecleon discovers him and enacts a parody of Odysseus' escape from Polyphemus' cave under the belly of a ram:[143]

ΒΔΕΛ. κάνθων, τί κλάεις; ὅτι πεπράσει τήμερον;

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breaking of scenic illusion (χιτῶνά μοι | φέρων δέδωκας δαιδάλεον, ὃν ᾔκασεν ἄρισθ' Ὅμηρος κρομμύου λεπυχάνῳ, 'you have brought and given to me a marvellous tunic, which Homer likened very aptly to the skin of an onion').

[140] Cf. *e.g.* Phillips (1959, 65–6) and Pellegrino (2013, 62–70), who gives further information on the play. On the fragments of Epicharmus and the relationship between his *Sirens* and the homonymous plays by the attic comedians, cf. *e.g.* Kerkhof (2001, 121–3, 161–2); on the mythological content of this play, cf. *e.g.* Sanchis Llopis (2002, 118–20).

[141] The humour of the comedy may have been based on the nudity of Odysseus and/or on the humble occupation of the laundresses: cf. Orth (2015, 178–82). It is likely that the same subject was at the centre of a comedy by Polyzelus called *Bath Scene*: cf. Orth (2015, 354). Both comedies, however, may have targeted the homonymous Sophoclean tragedy rather than the Homeric episode.

[142] In Aristophanes we also find caricatures that are not staged, but only based on epic allusions. In Ar. *Ucc.* vv. 1553–64, for instance, we find an allusion to the *Nekyia* (*Od.* 11), *i.e.* Odysseus' descent to Hades at the suggestion of Circe. In this passage, the Homeric reference in v. 1561 (ὥσπερ οὐδυσσεὺς) proves the epic allusion. In fr. 6 — which belongs to Aristophanes' fragmentary play called *Aeolosicon* — it has been argued that we find a parodic allusion to the opulence of Aeolus' family attested in *Od.* 10.5–12. The subject of the fragment are probably the daughters of the protagonist, Aeolosicon: κοιτὼν ἁπάσαις εἷς, πύελος μί' ἀρκέσει ('one bed and one bath will be enough for all the women'). While in the epic passage the family lives in a privileged condition of wealth, here its members are forced to live in a definitely poorer situation: cf. *e.g.* Nesselrath (1990, 235), Casolari (2003, 176 n. 24) and Pellegrino (2015, 42). Another possible Homeric parody is attested also in *Ra.* 1221. In this passage, the *lekythion* might be an allusion to the goatskin bag donated by Aeolus to Odysseus and containing the winds which will eventually be released and disperse the hero's fleet (*Od.* 10): cf. *e.g.* Del Corno (1985, 230), who has also interestingly suggested (1985, 238) that the scene of the weighing of the verses (vv. 1364–413) might humorously echo Zeus' weighing of the fates of Hector and Achilles in *Il.* 22.209. The theme, however, is a common one and is attested other times in the *Iliad*.

[143] On this scene cf. *e.g.* Dale (1969, 103–118), Dover (1972, 62–3), Davies (1990) Bonanno (1990, 17), Macía Aparicio (2000, 216–17), Compton-Engle (2015, 72–3). The text and translation of the *Wasps* are taken from Henderson (1998b).

βάδιζε θᾶττον. τί στένεις, εἰ μὴ φέρεις
Ὀδυσσέα τιν᾽; ΞΑΝΘ. ἀλλὰ ναὶ μὰ Δία φέρει
κάτω γε τουτονί τιν᾽ ὑποδεδυκότα.
ΒΔΕΛ. ποῖον; φέρ᾽ ἴδωμαι. ΞΑΝΘ. τουτονί. ΒΔΕΛ.τουτὶ τί ἦν;
τίς εἶ ποτ᾽, ὦνθρωπ᾽, ἐτεόν; ΦΙΛ. Οὖτις, νὴ Δία.
ΒΔΕΛ. Οὖτις σύ; ποδαπός; ΦΙΛ. Ἴθακος Ἀποδρασιππίδου.
ΒΔΕΛ. Οὖτις μὰ τὸν Δί᾽ οὔτι χαιρήσων γε σύ.

(Loathecleon) Why all the braying, Jenny? Don't want to be sold today? Get along there. Why are you fussing? Unless you've got Odysseus or somebody under there.
(Xanthias) Wait a minute. Good lord, somebody is curled up under here, look!
(Loathecleon) What? Let me have a look.
(Xanthias) There he is.
(Loathecleon) What's this? Who might you be, my good man? Well?
(Lovecleon) Noman. Honestly.
(Loathecleon) You're Noman? From where?
(Lovecleon) Ithaca. Son of Escapides.
(Loathecleon) Well, you're one Noman who'll be enjoying no manner of success.

The parody, however, is not only thematic: in fact, it has been noticed that it includes several epic linguistic reminiscences.[144] In his address to the donkey (vv. 171–81a), for instance, Loathecleon's 'humanisation' of the animal closely resembles the way in which Polyphemus attributes an implicit heroic standing to his ram by addressing it with warm familiarity (*Od.* 9.447–60).[145] In addition, Aristophanes plays on the breaking of dramatic illusion. Loathcleon and Lovecleon, two characters *of* the comedy, explicitly mention and pun on the Homeric model of the passage: in v. 181, Loathcleon names Odysseus; in vv. 184b–5, the reference to the name Οὖτις ('Noman') is an explicit reference to the trick used by Odysseus to escape from Polyphemus' cave; in v. 185, Philocleon claims to come from Ithaca and to be the son of Ἀποδρασιππίδης ('Escapides', literally 'the one who runs away with a horse'). The

[144] Cf. Magnelli (2004) and Di Sario (2007, 98–105), who has underlined the elements of 'visual parody' included in the passage.
[145] Cf. *e.g.* Di Sario (2007, 101–2), who has detected several elements that make the donkey more 'human' and has correctly argued that the parody here is caused by the substitution of the dignified ram with a donkey, a humble animal (here called κάνθων, 'pack-ass', in place of ὄνος). The humour of the passage lies also in an aspect that — as far as I know — has been curiously overlooked, *i.e.* the fact that while the Homeric ram was a good hiding spot because of its wool, the donkey does not provide the same service; in other terms, Philocleon chooses an animal which is totally useless for his purpose: his nonsensical plan, in the end, is humorously destined to failure.

compound Ἀποδρασιππίδης is a mock-epic *Redender Name* made up of three elements: the root of the verb ἀποδιδράσκω ('to escape'), the root of the noun ἵππος, ('horse') and the patronymical suffix –ίδης, which gives a characteristic epic flavour to the word.[146]

Caricatures of epic characters and plots were common in the Middle Comedy.[147] Although we do not know whether these plays took inspiration *directly* from the epic models or rather *indirectly* from their tragic transpositions, it is safe to assume that epic subjects were common in fourth-century theatrical performances. Homeric epic, for instance, seems to have been the model for several plays. Eubulus' *Dolon* (frr. 29–31) may have been a humorous re-intepretation of the *Dolōneia*, like the *Odysseus Deserter* by Epicharmus.[148] Alexis wrote three plays centred on the character of Helen (frr. 70–5), Phileterus composed a comedy called *Achilles* (fr. 4) and so did Anaxandrides (fr. 8), whose play could have been centred around the episode of Achilles' disguise as a girl on the island of Scyros or, perhaps, around the events linked to his education. Anaxandrides also composed a comedy named *Helena* (fr. 12), perhaps based on Euripides' tragedy.[149] In addition, several plays involved caricatures of characters and episodes of the *Odyssey*.[150] We know, for instance, that Alexis composed two plays called *Odysseus Being Bathed* and *Odysseus Weaving*. While almost nothing has remained of the former, the surviving fragments of the latter

[146] The term is funny because the mock-epic personal name (elevated from a formal perspective, but un-epic from a semantic one) is associated to a petty character and because while Philocleon affirms to be the son of 'the one who runs away with a horse', he actually tries to escape holding on to the belly of a much humbler animal. Cf. *e.g.* Dunbar (1995, 485–8), Grilli (2006, 358–9) and Di Sario (2007, 103). Antother 'staged' parody occurs in the *parodos* of the *Plutus*: the episode of the encounter of Odysseus with the Cyclops (vv. 290–321) is the subject of a sort of role-play, in which Cario embodies Polyphemus and Circes, whereas the Chorus embodies Odysseus, his companions and various animals. Even if the *scholia* on the passage report that the first scene was a parody of the *Cyclops* by Philoxenus of Cythera, the humour of the scene is surely based also on the contrast with the epic model. For a more detailed commentary on the passage and additional Homeric allusions, cf. *e.g.* Sommerstein (2001, 156–60).

[147] Cf. *e.g.* Sanchis Llopis, Montañés Gómez and Pérez Asensio (2007, 16–20). General considerations on the reuse of epic models in the Middle Comedy can be found also in Schiassi (1955), Hoffmann (1976), Nesselrath (1990, 188–240). For the discussed notion of 'Middle Comedy', cf. *e.g.* Nesselrath (1990, 65–187). Some titles concern the birth of the gods: these plays may have well been playing on the content of the Homeric Hymns: cf. *e.g.* Nesselrath (1995).

[148] Cf. *supra* pp. 91–2. The name of Eubulus' play may have been *doulon* ('slave'), as the content of the three extant fragments (frr. 29–31) seems to suggest: cf. *e.g.* Sanchis Llopis, Montañés Gómez and Pérez Asensio (2007, 534). For a commentary on the fragments of Eubulus, cf. Hunter (1983).

[149] None of the extant fragments and/or sources of these plays, however, gives us conclusive information on their plots. For a commentary on Anaxandrides' fragments, cf. Millis (2015).

[150] Cf. Stuligrosz (2017) for a general overview of the allusions to the *Odyssey*.

show Odysseus complaining that some unidentified fishermen are not catching for him fish of prime quality: it is therefore possible that the hero was depicted as a voracious glutton.[151] Anaxilas composed a *Calypso* (frr. 10–1) and a *Circe* (frr. 12–14): the extant fragments of these plays narrate Odysseus' experience at the sorceress' house and his companions' shameful transformation in swines.[152] In fr. 13, in particular, the verb κνησιᾶν ('to desire to scratch', 'to itch') is particularly interesting as it might disclose an allusion to the sexual relation between Circe and Odysseus:

> δεινὸν μὲν γὰρ ἔχονθ' ὑὸς
> ῥύγχος, ὦ φίλε, κνισιᾶν.
>
> It's terrible, my friend,
> to have a pig's snout and need to scratch![153]

It has been noticed that the verb, which is also attested with the meaning of 'feeling sexual desire', strongly suggests that Circe was depicted as a courtesan and Odysseus and his companions as her clients through the metaphorical use of animal transformation.[154] Another play called *Circe* was composed by Ephippus. The only extant fragment of the play (fr. 11) consists in a conversation between two characters, who might be identified as Circe and Odysseus:

> (A.) οἶνον πίοις ἂν ἀσφαλέστερον πολὺ ὑδαρῆ.
> (B.) μὰ τὴν γῆν, ἀλλὰ τρία καὶ τέτταρα.
> (A.) οὕτως ἄκρατον, εἰπέ μοι, πίῃ;
> (B.) τί φῄς;
>
> (A.) You'd be much safer drinking waterywine.
> (B.) No, by earth! Three-to-four!

[151] For a commentary on the fragments of Alexis, cf. Arnott (1996).
[152] It has been correctly suggested that the two surviving fragments of the play *Calypso* are likely to refer to the episode of Circe: they probably show Odysseus describing his experience at Circe's house to Calypso: cf. Sanchis Llopis (2000, 621–2).
[153] The translation is taken from Olson (2007).
[154] Cf. Olson (2007, 130). The representation of Circe as a courtesan is frequent in Middle and New Comedy: cf. *e.g.* Dutsch (2008, 75). A mocking representation of Circe may be portrayed also in fr. 10, in which the sorceress is depicted as an old woman who desires to taste the potion meant for her guests. These verses, which obviously play on the passage of the *Odyssey* in which Circe offers the *kykeon* to his guests (*Od.* 10. 234–6), might disclose a derisive representation of the sorceress, portrayed in the play as an old woman addicted to wine, in accordance to a clichéd representation of elderly women in Comedy: cf. *e.g.* Stuligrosz (2017, 20–1). The reworking of passages from the *Odyssey* in relation to courtesans is attested also in another play by Anaxilas called *Neottis* (frr. 21–22): cf. *infra* p. 108.

(A.) Tell me – you really drink it that strong?
(B.) What do you mean?[155]

In this conversation, Circe serves a watered-down wine to Odysseus, but the hero complains and asks instead for a much stronger drink, with the proportion of three to four.[156] It has been correctly suggested that this is a bathetic reinterpretation of the epic model. First, Circe should be interested in serving strong wine to Odysseus in order to cloud his mind, but instead she supplies a weak drink. Second, the reaction of the hero may imply a caricatural depiction: unlike his precautious and cunning Homeric *alter ego*, he is represented as a gluttonous drunkard who incautiously reveals his human weakness and eases his own bewildering.[157] Antifanes composed a comedy called *Cyclops*, in which the Cyclops was depicted as a rustic character in love with Galatea, to whom he offered a banquet and by whom he was probably mocked.[158] Eubulus composed at least two plays on the *Odyssey*: in the *Nausicaa*, he portrayed the peregrinations of a hungry Odysseus, while no definitive conclusions can be drawn from the only surviving fragment (fr. 71) of the play called *Odysseus or Panoptai* (‘*Men who see everything*’). The caricature of Odysseus was probably represented also in two plays by Anaxandrides (frr. 34–5) and Amphis (fr. 27), both called *Odysseus*: the extant fragments of the poems, however, do not contain descriptions of the character of Odysseus and do not allow to reconstruct the plot of the comedy.[159]

Caricatures of epic characters are attested also in another comic theatrical genre, Satyr Play.[160] Despite the scarcity of evidence for this genre, the presence of epic parody in Satyr Play is proved by the title of the plays, which demonstrate that their

[155] The translation is taken from Olson (2006–12).
[156] This contrasts with the epic model, in which she offers to him the strong Pramnian wine: cf. *Od.* 9. 345–50.
[157] Cf. Bartol and Danielewicz (2011, 416–19) and Stuligrosz (2017, 21–2).
[158] Cf. Schiassi (p. 118) and Sanchis Llopis, Montañés Gómez and Pérez Asensio (2007, 363–5).
[159] Sanchis Llopis, Montañés Gómez and Pérez Asensio (2007, 253–6). For a possible interpretation of the poor evidence on these comedies, cf. Millis (2015) and Papachrysostomou (2016).
[160] A satisfactory examination of epic parody in Satyr Play, to my knowledge, is missing. The research on it has not been particularly fruitful perhaps also because of the priority given to the ‘paratragic’ rather than to the ‘paraepic’ aspects of Satyr Play. Some general considerations can be found in Di Marco (2000), who notices that the humour is inherent in the Satyr Play also for the contrast between heroic subjects (such as Odysseus, Heracles and Achilles) and vulgar figures like the satyrs. On the general ‘lowering’ of the status of heroes and gods, cf. also Zanetto (2004, 48–53).

plots were frequently based on the epic adventures of Heracles and of Odysseus.[161] We know that several poets composed satyr plays on the Heracles' saga: Phrynichus' *Antaeus* (or *Libyes*), Aristeas' *Antaeus*, Achaeus' *Cycnus*, Astydamas Minor's and Tiesitheus' *Heracles*, Chaeremon's *Centaur*, Sophocles' *Heracles*, Sophocles' *Cerberus*, Euripides' *Eurystheus* and *Syleus* are all focused on the deeds of the hero. As for Odysseus, we know that Aristeas composed a *Cyclops*, which inspired Euripides' version, that Aeschylus composed a *Circe* and Sophocles a drama called *Nausicaa* (or *Plyntriai*).[162] The most valuable evidence of epic parody within Satyr Plays, however, can be found in the only of such plays that has survived in its entirety, Euripides' *Cyclops*.[163] Even if the language of Satyr Play is overall the language of tragedy, the poem — a burlesque reworking of the Homeric *Kyklopeia* — is significantly based on Homeric language (this aspect has been overlooked by most of the commentaries).[164] The poem is a comic adaptation of the epic model both from a thematic and from a linguistic point of view. The most representative example of epic

[161] A preliminary study of the reminiscences of the *Odyssey* in Satyr Play has been formulated by Sutton (1974b). For a detailed historical profile of the fortune of *Mythentravestie* in relation to Odysseus, cf. *e.g.* Casolari (2003, 199–295). Some titles may refer to Homeric subjects, such as *e.g.* Achaeus' *Hephaestus*, Polemaeus' *Aias*, Sophocles' *Lovers of Achilles*. Further notable plays are Astydamas' *Hermes* — which was focused on the trickster god protagonist of the humorous Homeric hymn — and Sophocles' *Pandora* (or *Sphyrokopoi*) that might have played on the Hesiodic model.

[162] Sutton (1974a) has critically analysed the texts included in the *SGF*, pointing out that not all of them are undoubtedly Satyr Plays. A study of the Satyr Plays of Aeschylus has been carried out by Podlecki (2005). On the *Circe*, cf. *e.g.* Dobson (1936), Mette (1963, 127–9), Rodríguez-Adrados (1965), Katsouris (1982), Di Marco (1994). We are not sure whether the *Nausicaa* was a Satyr Play, but the homonymous comedies of Philyllius and Eubulus support this hypothesis: on this play, cf. Shapiro (1995). Another Aeschylean Satyr Play with Homeric hypotext is the *Proteus*, which was inspired by Menelaus' encounter with Proteus (and the latter's prophecy) narrated in book 4 of the *Odyssey*. Aeschylus' *Ichneutai* — the best-preserved ancient Satyr Play after Euripides' *Cyclops* —is extremely interesting for the present analysis because it is a reworking of the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes.* The relation between these two poems has been already investigated: cf. *e.g.* Wilamowitz-Moellendorff (1912), Koetgen (1914), Fernández-Delgado (2007), Vergados (2013, 79–84). Likewise, Sophocles' *Iambe* was ostensibly based on the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*.

[163] The bibliography on this poem is extensive. For the comic elements, cf. *e.g.* Kassel (1955), Wetzel (1965), Arnott (1972), Davies (1999), Zanetto (2004, 307–41). For a study of the relationship between the *Cyclops* of Euripides and the homonymous play by Cratinus, cf. *e.g.* Kaibel (1895) and Tanner (1915). For the relationship between Euripides' *Cyclops* and its Homeric model: cf. Wetzel (1965), Sutton (1974b), Katsouris (1997). The date of the play has been widely discussed: cf. Ferrante (1960), Seaford (1984, 51–9) and Katsouris (1997, 1 n. 1).

[164] According to Wetzel (1965), approximately one third of the whole play (270 out of 709 lines) is based on the Homeric episode in one way or another. The language is a mixture of 'high' and 'low' expressions: for the colloquialisms and similar forms in Euripides' plays, including the *Cyclops*, cf. *e.g.* Ussher (1978, 204–6) and Stevens (1976).

parody in the play is attested in the scene in which the satyrs (the chorus) mock the Cyclops, who has been blinded by Odysseus and his companions (vv. 669–84).

ΧΟΡ. τί χρῆμ᾽ ἀυτεῖς, ὦ Κύκλωψ; ΚΥΚ. ἀπωλόμην.
ΧΟΡ. αἰσχρός γε φαίνῃ. ΚΥΚ. κἀπὶ τοῖσδέ γ᾽ ἄθλιος.
ΧΟΡ. μεθύων κατέπεσες ἐς μέσους τοὺς ἄνθρακας;
ΚΥΚ. Οὖτίς μ᾽ ἀπώλεσ᾽. ΧΟΡ. οὐκ ἄρ᾽ οὐδείς <σ᾽> ἠδίκει.
ΚΥΚ. Οὖτίς με τυφλοῖ βλέφαρον. ΧΟΡ. οὐκ ἄρ᾽ εἶ τυφλός.
ΚΥΚ. †ὡς δὴ σύ†. ΧΟΡ. καὶ πῶς σ᾽ οὔτις ἂν θείη τυφλόν;
ΚΥΚ. σκώπτεις. ὁ δ᾽ Οὖτις ποῦ ᾽στιν; ΧΟΡ. οὐδαμοῦ, Κύκλωψ.
ΚΥΚ. ὁ ξένος ἵν᾽ ὀρθῶς ἐκμάθῃς μ᾽ ἀπώλεσεν,
ὁ μιαρός, ὅς μοι δοὺς τὸ πῶμα κατέκλυσεν.
ΧΟΡ. δεινὸς γὰρ οἶνος καὶ παλαίεσθαι βαρύς.
ΚΥΚ. πρὸς θεῶν, πεφεύγασ᾽ ἢ μένουσ᾽ ἔσω δόμων;
ΧΟΡ. οὗτοι σιωπῇ τὴν πέτραν ἐπήλυγα
λαβόντες ἑστήκασι. ΚΥΚ. ποτέρας τῆς χερός;
ΧΟΡ. ἐν δεξιᾷ σου. ΚΥΚ. ποῦ; ΧΟΡ. πρὸς αὐτῇ τῇ πέτρᾳ.
ἔχεις; ΚΥΚ. κακόν γε πρὸς κακῷ· τὸ κρανίον
παίσας κατέαγα. ΧΟΡ. καί σε διαφεύγουσί γε.

(Chorus Leader) Why do you shout so, Cyclops?
(Cyclops) I am ruined!
(Chorus Leader) You do look ugly.
(Cyclops) And miserable as well!
(Chorus Leader) Did you fall in a drunken stupor into the coals?
(Cyclops) Noman destroyed me.
(Chorus Leader) No one, then, has wronged you.
(Cyclops) Noman has blinded my eye.
(Chorus Leader) So you are not blind.
(Cyclops) <How sharp the pain!>
(Chorus Leader) And how could nobody make you blind?
(Cyclops) You mock me. But this Noman, where is he?
(Chorus Leader) Nowhere, Cyclops.
(Cyclops) Know well, it was my guest who destroyed me, the abominable guest, who drowned me with the drink he gave me.
(Chorus Leader) Yes, wine is a dangerous thing and hard to wrestle against.
(Cyclops) Tell me, for heaven's sake, have they fled or are they still in the house?
(Chorus Leader) They are standing here quietly under the overhang of the cliff.
(Cyclops) To my left or my right?
(Chorus Leader) To your right.
(Cyclops) Where?
(Chorus Leader) Right next to the cliff. Have you got them?
(Cyclops) Yes, got pain on top of pain! I've hit my head and broken it.

(Chorus Leader) And what's more, they've given you the slip.[165]

The passage is a playful reworking of the famous section of the Homeric episode in which Odysseus, in order to deceive the Cyclops and find his way out of the monster's cave, conceives the verbal *escamotage* of calling himself 'Nobody'. The humour derives mostly from two elements. First, from the distancing effect of the attribution of dialogue to the hostile satyrs — inherently farcical figures — rather than to the Cyclopes (as in the epic model). Second, from the comments of the satyrs: aware of Odysseus' trick, they mock Polyphemus for his ugliness (v. 670) and they pontificate on the dangers of wine in playful terms (v. 678).[166] In addition, the satyrs fool Polyphemus by giving him wrong directions to find Odysseus (vv. 680–4), thus making the Cyclops clumsily bump his head on a rock (v. 683).[167] The humour of the overall play originates also from the witty identification of Silenus and the satyrs of the chorus with Odysseus and his crew.[168] This is particularly clear in the prologue of the play, in which Silenus recounts his (and his crew's) past adventures before landing in Sicily, where the Cyclops live. This is a theatrical reinterpretation of Odysseus' *apologoi*, *i.e.* the hero's narrations of his adventures at the court of the Phaecians. The similarities are based on precise reminiscences that are playfully re-contextualised. Silenus' reference to the storm encountered near the Malean Cape in the prologue of the play (vv. 19–21) — which redirects the ship towards the land of the Cyclops — is, for instance, an explicit Homeric allusion.[169] From a linguistic perspective, vv. 16–17 closely recalls several epic passages.[170] In vv. 41–3, Polyphemus's ram — which in

[165] The translation is taken from Kovacs (1994).
[166] The satyrs play with the two meanings of the adjective αἰσχρός (v. 670), both already Homeric: 'ugly' and 'shameful'. The humour lies, obviously, in the fact that Polyphemus is a monster even before his blinding. In v. 678, the sentence is comic because it is out of context, thus underlining the ironic detachment of the satyrs.
[167] From a dramaturgical perspective, the clumsiness of the Cyclops recalls the Homeric episode in which Ajax falls in the dung during the foot-race against Odysseus (cf. pp. 71–2). In addition, the expression used by Polyphemus (κακόν γε πρὸς κακῷ) is an epic one (cf. *e.g. Il.* 16.111, 19.290): the epic diction fosters the comic tone of the passage.
[168] This is due to the dramaturgical contraints of Euripides, who had to merge the figures of the satyrs and that of Polyphemus: cf. Paduano (2005, 11).
[169] In the *Odyssey*, a storm is braved by two Achaean heroes, Menelaus (*Od.* 3.287–90) and Odysseus (*Od.* 9.80–1). Cf. *e.g.* Paduano (2005, 11, 57).
[170] E. *Cyc.* 16–17 παῖδες δ' <ἐπ'> ἐρετμοῖς ἥμενοι γλαυκὴν ἅλα | ῥοθίοισι λευκαίνοντες ἐζήτουν σ', ἄναξ, ('and my sons, sitting at the oars, made the gray sea white with their rowing as they searched for you, lord') The insertion of the ἐπ' (Seidler) makes v. 16 a close echo of *Od.* 12.171–2, but, as pointed

the *Odyssey* is described as the most beautiful one (9.432) — is addressed by the satyrs as if it were a god or an illustrious person.[171] In v. 57, the sheepfolds are pompously called θάλαμοι (with epic plural, cf. *e.g. Il.* 14.188).[172] In v. 596, the Chorus is about to blind Polyphemus and affirms πέτρας τὸ λῆμα κἀδάμαντος ἔξομεν ('our hearts shall be like rock or adamant!'), in accordance to a formulaically epic expression.[173]

2.4.2.2 Caricature of epic scenes and motifs

When it comes to the caricature of epic scenes and motifs, we must return, once again, to the Pseudo-Homeric poems in order to consider the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* and the *Margites*. The *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* is rich in caricatures of epic themes. An example of this type of humour is represented by the comic reuse of the theme of divine antagonism: while in epic poetry dissension revolves around serious issues such as those outlined in the Succession myths narrated by Hesiod in his *Theogony*, in the hymn the quarrel between Apollo and Hermes arise from a petty incident: the theft of fifty cows.[174] Likewise, the focus on the birth of the gods or on key events in their lives normally points to the definition of their position in the Olympian order and of their privileges: when a crisis in the distribution of the honours occurs, Zeus usually takes the lead and solves the matter. In the hymn, not only is the threat to the established order bathetic in itself, as it comes from a child, but this 'crisis' is comically depicted in human tones: like in a familiar discussion between two brothers for the possession of a trivial object, in the hymn, Hermes steals the property of his brother Apollo, who forcibly drags him to their father Zeus to solve a childish squabble.[175] Another parody

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out by Paduano (2005, 56–7), the line recalls epic passages even without the integration: cf. *e.g. Od.* 9. 104, 180, 472.

[171] E. *Cyc.* 41–3 παῖ γενναίων μὲν πατέρων | γενναίων δ' ἐκ τοκάδων, | πᾷ δή μοι νίσῃ σκοπέλους;, ('Son of a noble sire and a noble dam, by what road, tell me, are you heading for the crags?'). Cf. *e.g.* Zanetto (2004, 314). Paduano (2005, 58–9), by contrast, considers this passage paratragic rather than paraepic.

[172] Cf. *e.g.* Wetzel (1965, 47).

[173] Cf. *e.g. Il.* 24.205, 521, Hes. *Op.* 147, *Th.* 239. Hesiodic remembrances are attested later in the passage, when Odysseus, in solemn terms, recites a Hesiodic geneaology (v. 601).

[174] Vergados (2013, 28–30). The number of stolen cows is not a coincidence: as noticed by Fernández Delgado (1990; 1998), it is exactly half the amount that was usually sacrificed in the hecatombs in honour of Apollo.

[175] Cf. Hermes' words καὶ γὰρ ἐμεῖο πατὴρ φίλος εὔχεαι εἶναι (v. 378), a funny expression of childish jealousy. On this matter, cf. Clay (1989). Hermes' willingness to join the Olympian circle (cf. vv. 172–

of epic themes lies in the description of Hermes' appearance in Olympus. While this is typically a solemn scene in the Homeric hymns, here Hermes is indecorously introduced to the Olympians as a burglar.[176] In the *Margites,* epic scenes are employed to underline the silliness of the protagonist. The stupidity of Margites, for instance, is proved by some evidence which reports him unsuccessfully trying to count the waves of the sea.[177] Interestingly, the act of counting the waves not only connotes Margites' silliness but discloses a parody of several specific Homeric scenes, which has been completely overlooked: Odysseus who stares at the sea on the island of Calypso (*Od.* 5.81–4), Nestor's expression πέλαγος μέγα μετρήσαντες ('having measured the great open water') in *Od.* 3.179, and Achilles who cries gazing ἐπ' ἀπείρονα πόντον ('on the infinite water', *Il.* 1.350).[178]

In the context of archaic lyric poetry, epic scenes and motifs are often employed by Anacreon. Unlike Archilochus and Hipponax, Anacreon never turns epic models into uncouth vulgarity; on the contrary, he plays on sophisticated allusions, seeking to provoke smiles rather than laughter.[179] In *PMG* 413, for instance, Anacreon reshapes a Homeric simile (*Od.* 9.391–3) attested in the scene in which Odysseus, in the act of skewering Polyphemus' eye with a burning stake, is compared to a smith who dips a big hammer in cold water to quench it: just as the boiling metal 'sizzles' in cold water

5) is a direct consequence of his 'inferior divine nature', which has been widely researched: cf. *e.g.* Càssola (1975, 156–60) and Clay (1989, 95–151).

[176] For a list of parallels, cf. Vergados (2013, 29). The witty nuance of the scene is meta-poetically supported by the laughter that Hermes provokes (vv. 281, 389, 420) and by Zeus' ironic use of the word σπουδαῖον ('serious') at v. 332 to describe the nature of the quarrel (cf. Bungard 2011, 156). The humour, here, obviously relies also on the young age of the culprit, an aspect that is pointedly underlined by Hermes' himself in the hymn.

[177] Cf. *e.g.* Nic.Greg. *Laud.* 162. The act of counting the waves was proverbially fruitless, but we cannot exclude that such a proverbial expression for Margites' stupidity was interpreted as an actual episode of the poem. It is even possible that the proverbial expression itself derived from a scene of this poem, just as several other Homeric expressions became popular and proverbial. Moreover, if we follow Photius (*Lexicon* μ 241), who reports that the protagonist did not even know how to count, this vain action becomes even more inconclusive and nonsensical. Cf. *infra* p. 129 n.5.

[178] Cf. also Hes. *Op.* 648 μέτρα πολυφλοίσβοιο θαλάσσης. The reference to 'counting' men recurs also in other passages that are not strictly connected with the sea, such as *e.g. Il.* 3.314–15 (Ἕκτωρ δὲ Πριάμοιο πάϊς καὶ δῖος Ὀδυσσεὺς | χῶρον μὲν πρῶτον διεμέτρεον) or *Od.* 16.235 (ἀλλ' ἄγε μοι μνηστῆρας ἀριθμήσας κατάλεξον).

[179] From what we know, Anacreon's parody of epic scenes seems to have been less explicit than that of Hipponax and Archilochus, and mostly based on the resetting of epic scenes into lighter (mainly erotic) contexts. The lighthearted nature of the poems of Anacreon has been frequently pointed out by scholarship and is also proved by ancient sources (cf. *e.g.* Hor. *Carm.* 4.9.9–10).

after the quenching, the stake sizzles when it skewers the eye of the Cyclops.[180] In the fragment of Anacreon, the same simile refers to Eros, who first 'hammers' with his erotic strength the poetic 'I' and then dips him in cold water:[181]

> μεγάλῳ δηῦτέ μ' Ἔρως ἔκοψεν ὥστε χαλκεὺς
> πελέκει, χειμερίῃ δ' ἔλουσεν ἐν χαράδρῃ.
>
> Once again Love has struck me like a smith with a great hammer and dipped me in the wintry torrent.[182]

Given the popularity of the Homeric scene, it is possible that — besides the humorous elaboration of the idea of being love-struck — the audience recognised the epic reference in the passage and laughed at its lighter reuse: while in the *Odyssey* the metaphor enhances the suspense of the story — ultimately, a matter of life or death — here it is used to describe a much more 'trivial' subject: the love of the speaker.[183] Another valuable aspect of the fragment derives from the epic description of the cold water attested in the Homeric passage, εἰν ὕδατι ψυχρῷ, which is replaced here by χειμερίῃ … ἐν χαράδρῃ, a proverbial expression employed to describe unescapable situations: Anacreon 'lowers' the linguistic tone of the fragment by employing a proverbial utterance for the description of an epic memory.[184] Likewise, *PMG* 347

[180] It is not a coincidence that the scene in question, which will be intensively re-employed in subsequent parodic literature (cf. pp. 130–1, 189–90), is one of the most popular of the poem.
[181] Gentili (1965, 241–3) has been the first to notice the Homeric allusion in this fragment. Some parodic nuances may lie also in the nature of the πέλεκυς (which has been discussed by scholars: for a valuable interpretation and some bibliography, cf. *e.g.* Pace 1994) and in the potential double meaning of the act of quenching (Eros is quenching the 'stake' of the speaker, *i.e.* his penis): cf. Pace (1994, 94 n. 4) for bibliography. The ironic tone of the fragment is supported also by Goldhill (1987, 10).
[182] The translations of Anacreon's poems are taken from Campbell (1988).
[183] It has been correctly argued (cf. Pace 1994) that the allusive charge of the passage invests also the simile that precedes that of the smith, in which Odysseus and his comrades are compared to carpenters who drill holes in the wood of a ship (*i.e.* Polyphemus' eye). This demonstrates, once again, the refined ability of Anacreon and of ancient poets to play with epic models, drawing inspiration from different scenes and merging them together to enhance their allusive value. We must not forget, at any rate, that not only archaic poets were able to mix and play with different epic passages, but also that archaic epic was extremely fluid and that therefore the epic poems that we read today might not be exactly those that Anacreon himself would have known.
[184] For the proverbial nature of the expression, cf. Bowra (1961, 290–1). The fact that the word χαράδρη is already attested in Homer (cf. *e.g. Il.* 16.390) does not undermine the proverbial — and therefore inherently popular — colour of the expression. On the contrary, it reinforces the playful mock-epic overtone of the poem.

contains two separate poems, both packed with epic diction and allusions.[185] In the first of these poems (vv. 1–10), the scene of an unknown character having his hair cut involves a playful, light-hearted allusion (vv. 3–8) to the heroic death of epic characters:[186]

καὶ κ[όμη]ς, ἥ τοι κατ᾽ ἀβρὸν
ἐσκία[ζ]εν αὐχένα·
νῦν δὲ δὴ σὺ μὲν στολοκρός,
ἡ δ᾽ ἐς αὐχμηρὰς πεσοῦσα
χεῖρας ἀθρόη μέλαιναν
ἐς κόνιν κατερρύη
τλημον[.]ς τομῆι σιδήρου
περιπεσο[ῦ]σ᾽· ἐγὼ δ᾽ ἄσηισι
τείρομαι· τί γάρ τις ἔρξηι
μηδ᾽ὑπὲρ Θρήικης τυχών;

… and of the hair, which shadowed your soft neck; and now, look! You are bald, and your hair has fallen into coarse hands and tumbled in a heap in the black dust, having encountered miserably the cutting blade of iron; and I am worn away with distress: for what is one to do if he has not succeeded even for the sake of Thrace?

[185] The fragment is transmitted by *P.Oxy.* 2322. The division of the fragment in two different poems is today generally agreed on. In Gentili's edition, the first fragment of *P.Oxy.* 2322 (= *PMG* 347) includes frr. 71 (vv. 1–10) and 72 (11–19), while the second only consists of fr. 73 (= *PMG* 347A), almost unreadable as a result of its textual corruption. For a commentary on the fragments, cf. *e.g.* Gentili (1958, 206–18) and Hutchinson (2001, 264–73).

[186] As far as I know, scholarship has stressed the Homeric influence on the passage without individuating precise references. The character referred to in the fragments is probably Smerdies, protagonist of *PMG* 5: cf. *e.g.* Gentili (1958, 155 n. 1). The cutting of the hair is described in similar, ironic tones in *PMG* 414 ἀπέκειρας δ᾽ ἁπαλῆς κόμης ἄμωμον ἄνθος· ('You have cut off the perfect flower of your soft hair'). The word ἄμωμον ('without blemish') is attested already in Hes. *Th.* 259 and recalls the Homeric adjectives ἀμύμων and ἀμώμητος: cf. Nicolosi (2007, 180). The verb ἀποκείρω, moreover, has its only Homeric occurrence in the passage in which Achilles cuts his hair on the grave of Patroclus. The funerary allusion might have enhanced the ironic overtone. For a commentary, cf. Leo (2015, 132–5). Fr. 72 (vv. 11–19) belongs, in all probability, to a different poem (cf. *e.g.* Gentili 1958, 213–14). Here, the narrator reports the grief of a woman (cf. Capra 2001, 147 n. 2 for potential identifications) who suffers for unknown reasons and asks her mother to be thrown in the sea in order to be released from pain. The supplication of the woman consists entirely of epic expressions (cf. Gentili 1958, 217–8 and Capra 2001). If, as it is likely, the woman of the fragment is a courtesan well known by Anacreon's audience, then the reuse of the Homeric expression to foster the pathos would surely have a comic effect, as such aulic diction would have been recognised as prononuced by a courtesan: cf. *e.g.* Kirkwood (1974, 160–1). Likewise, in *PMG* 438 the (presumably) female speakers allude to an unknown character with the epic ἠπεροπός ('deceiver'), a form which recalls the epic ἀπεροπεύς and the verb ἠπεροπεύειν, both attested in relation to epic cunning characters (cf. *e.g.* Paris, Aphrodites, Antilochus, Odysseus): cf. Gentili (1958, XVIIIi, 215–16), who notices also the dactylic incipit, which could foster the epic memory.

First, the use of the verb πίπτω (πεσοῦσα, v. 4), frequently employed for the description of the death of warriors. In particular, the passage seems to allude to several specific episodes, such as the death of Simoeisius at the hands of Ajax the Great (*Il.* 4.482–4). In this scene, the victim is hit by the spear of Ajax and is compared to a smooth (λείη) poplar ('bald', in botanical terms) who falls (πέσεν) in the dust (ἐν κονίῃσι). Another allusion might be to the scene attested in *Il.* 13.201–5, in which Ajax the Lesser beheads the Trojan warrior Imbrius and then kicks away his enemy's head, which falls by Hector's feet. Here, we find some lexical similarities (cf. v. 205 πέσεν ἐν κονίῃσι) and a reference to the soft neck (vv. 202–3 κεφαλὴν δ'ἀπαλῆς ἀπὸ δειρῆς | κόψεν) of Imbrius, which recalls the ἁβρὸν … αὐχένα (vv. 1–2) of the fragment. In addition, the passage echoes *Il.* 15.535–8, where Meges fights against Dolops. In the middle of the fight, Meges hits his rival's helmet and cuts off the horse-crest, which falls in the sand. The hair lock is personified through the use of the verb καταρρέω (here in the form κατερρύη), which in Homer is employed only in relation to blood (cf. *e.g. Il.* 4.149), and by the reference to σιδήρος (literally 'iron'), a word commonly used in epic for weapons. The expression μέλαιναν | ἐς κόνιν of the fragment (vv. 5–6), in addition, is shaped on several analogous epic expressions.[187] It is obvious that the implicit comparison between the fragment and the epic hypotext is ironic and debunks the subsquent expression of grief by the speaker (vv. 8–10).

Comic allusions to specific epic passages are attested also in the Old and Middle Comedy.[188] Pherecrates' fr. 159, for instance, is a comic allusion to the Homeric passage in which Odysseus explains to Achilles which reparative gifts Agamemnon offers to him, including seven girls from Lesbos:[189]

{A.}δώσει δέ σοι γυναῖκας ἑπτὰ Λεσβίδας.
{B.}καλόν γε δῶρον ἕπτ' ἔχειν λαικαστρίας.

(A) He will give you seven women from Lesbos.
(B) What a nice present to get, seven sluts.[190]

[187] Cf. Gentili (1958, 211).
[188] As previously stated, in some fragments it is possible to spot clear Homeric allusions (apparently) devoid of humorous connotations: cf. *e.g.* Cassio (2002, 73–80) on Epich. fr. 97. 7–17 and Amado Rodríguez (1994, 103) and Quaglia (2007, 259–60) on Cratin. frr. 143 and 144.
[189] *Il.* 9.270–1 δώσει δ'ἑπτὰ γυναῖκας ἀμύμονα ἔργα ἰδυίας | Λεσβίδας.
[190] Translations of Pherecrates' fragments are taken from Storey (2011).

In the fragment, one of the two characters (probably Odysseus himself) offers his interlocutor (probably Achilles) the same gift offered in the *Iliad*. The recipient of the present, however, comically reveals the true identity of the girls from Lesbos: they are nothing but prostitutes.[191] The same technique is attested in Hermipp. fr. 47, a fragment which is directed against Pericles. In the last verse, the *iunctura* αἴθωνι Κλέωνι ('fierce Cleon') is a parodic echo of the Homeric expression αἴθωνι σιδήρῳ ('glittering iron', cf. *e.g. Il.* 4.485): here, the epic hypotext is changed to make an allusion to Cleon, the political rival of Pericles.[192] Hermippus employs this technique also in two hexametric fragments that I will investigate more in detail in the next chapter, fr. 63 and fr. inc. fab. 77.[193] In the former, epic echoes are attested in v. 3, which is a mixture of two different epic formulas (δεῦρ' ἤγαγε, cf. *e.g. Od.* 4.312, and the extremely common νηὶ μελαίνῃ, cf. *e.g. Il.* 1.300, *Od.* 3.61, Hes. *Th.* 636). This verse might echo the scene of the *Odyssey* in which Eumaeus recounts to the disguised Odysseus the landing of the Phoenicians on the island of Syria (15.415–6) or the list of the goods that Paris, after leaving Sparta, takes with him to Troy, together with Helen (*Il.* 7.363, 389–90).[194] In the latter, a thematic allusion is attested in vv. 4–5, in which the comparison of two different wines — that of Thasos and that of Chios — is described with the same expressions attested in the *Odyssey* for the comparison between Ajax and Achilles (*Od.* 11.550–1, 469–70 = 24.17–18).[195] Likewise, vv. 7–10 rework three verses of the *Odyssey* that belong to the episode of Polyphemus (9.210, 9.359).[196]

[191] Likewise, in fr. 259 (Ἥραν τέ οἱ Ἀσπασίαν τίκτει Καταπυγοσύνη | παλλακὴν κυνώπιδα, 'and Shameful Sex gave birth to his Hera, | a dog-eyed concubine', transl. Storey 2011, 391), Cratinus parodically 'contaminates' the epic *iunctura* βοῶπις … Ἥρη (cf. *e.g. Il.* 18, 396) with the Homeric κυνώπις (attested in relation to Hera in *Il.* 18.396) to pounce on Pericles' *hetaira*, Aspasia: cf. *e.g.* Farioli (2001, 48–9 n. 47) and Magnelli (2004, 15–16).
[192] Cf. *e.g.* Olson (2007, 10), Storey (2011, 301) and Comentale (2017, 181–94).
[193] This is the longest hexametric section which a single character delivers in a comedy. This 'exception' has led some scholars to break up the section and assign the hexameters to two different speakers: cf. Comentale (2017, 260). The comedy is dated to the late 430s–early 420s BC (cf. *e.g.* Olson 2007, 151 and Pellegrino 2000, 197 n. 3).
[194] This allusion has been noticed by Kassel and Austin in their *apparatus* (*PCG* V 592).
[195] For an updated bibliography and commentary, cf. Olson (2007, 306–7), Quaglia (2007, 244–5) and Comentale (2017, 307–21). As pointed out by Comentale (2017, 314), this fragment is even closer to the epic language than fr. 63. In all probability, the speaker of the fragment is Dionysus.
[196] This is another proof that the episode of the Cyclops was particularly fertile for parodic allusions: cf. *e.g.* Comentale (2017, 319–21).

In the third *stasimon* of the *Acharnians* (vv. 1150–73), Aristophanes mentions in abusive tones some characters and situations related to the world of the theatre. Aristophanes abuses the choragus Antimachus and curses him twice: first, wishing him to get no dinner; second, wishing him to be beaten up by Orestes, a famous thug. In the attempt of defending himself from Orestes, Antimachus would try to grab a stone, but he would grab a dump instead and hit Cratinus with that (vv. 1168–73):[197]

ὁ δὲ λίθον λαβεῖν
βουλόμενος ἐν σκότῳ λάβοι
τῇ χειρὶ πέλεθον ἀρτίως κεχεσμένον·
ἐπάξειεν δ᾽ ἔχων
τὸν μάρμαρον, κἄπειθ᾽ ἁμαρ-
τὼν βάλοι Κρατῖνον.

and when he wants to grab a stone
I hope in the darkness
he grabs in his hand a fresh-shat turd,
and holding that glittering missile
let him charge at his foe, then miss him
and hit Cratinus!

This constitutes a parody of the Homeric motif of a character throwing an object against another individual with hostile intent and failing (and sometimes even hitting someone else). Another noteworthy aspect of Aristophanes' epic parody is his use of Hesiod as a model. This is confirmed, for instance, by a passage of the *parabasis* of the *Birds* (vv. 693–702), in which the chorus celebrates the race of birds by recalling its divine origins. The passage is an explicit parody of Hesiod's *Theogony* (and of epic genealogies in general).[198]

[197] This can be either in a military context or not: for a deeper investigation and Homeric parallels, cf. *e.g.* Macía Aparicio (2000, 214–15) and Olson (2002, 352), who provides further bibliography. This topos, as I will show in the next chapter, is interestingly and meaningfully attested also in the fragment of the most representative fifth-century parodist, Hegemon of Thasos. A similar, more subtle use of epic motifs is attested also in a previous passage of the play: in vv. 580–90, Dicaeopolis is scared by the plumed helmet of Lamachus just as baby Astyanax is scared by Hector's helmet in *Il.* 6.466–70: cf. Hunter (2004, 242), Zimmermann (2006, 75), Graziosi and Haubold (2010). In Ar. *Eq.* 526–9, Aristophanes makes a bathetic allusion to the attack of the Scamander in *Il.* 21.

[198] Cf. Pellegrino (2015, 159–60). Another example of Hesiodic parody is attested in fr. adesp. com. 1086, 9–10 (= Hes. *Op*. 765–828) and in fr. 239 (= Hes. 284 MW): 'ἀκεστής' λέγουσιν οἱ παλαιοί, οὐκ 'ἠπητής'. ἠπήσασθαι ἔστι μὲν ἅπαξ παρ᾽ Ἀριστοφάνει ἐν Δαιταλεῦσι, παίζοντι τὰς Ἡσιόδου Ὑποθήκας 'καὶ κόσκινον ἠπήσασθαι' σὺ δὲ λέγε 'ἀκέσασθαι' τὸ ἱμάτιον ('The ancients say 'restorer,' not 'mender.' The word 'to mend' occurs one time in Aristophanes in *The Banqueters*, when he is making fun of Hesiod's Precepts 'and mend a sieve.' But you should say 'restore' the cloak').

In the Middle Comedy, Homeric passages and/or scenes are parodically reworked, for instance, in seven verses (vv. 15–21) from fr. 22 of Anaxilas (which belongs to the play called *Neottis*) and in fr. 1 of Sotades (which belongs to a comedy called *Captive Women*):[199]

> ἡ δὲ Νάννιον τί νυνὶ διαφέρειν Σκύλλης δοκεῖ;
> οὐ δύ᾽ ἀποπνίξασ᾽ ἑταίρους τὸν τρίτον θηρεύεται
> ἔτι λαβεῖν; ἀλλ᾽ † ἐξέπεσε † πορθμὶς ἐλατίνῳ πλάτῃ.
> ἡ δὲ Φρύνη τὴν Χάρυβδιν οὐχὶ πόρρω που ποεῖ,
> τόν τε ναύκληρον λαβοῦσα καταπέπωκ᾽ αὐτῷ σκάφει;
> ἡ Θεανὼ δ᾽ οὐχὶ Σειρὴν ἐστιν ἀποτετιλμένη;
> βλέμμα καὶ φωνὴ γυναικός, τὰ σκέλη δὲ κοψίχου.
>
> What difference can you see today between Nannion and Scylla? After she strangled two boyfriends, isn't she angling now to catch a third? But † fell out † a ship with a fir-wood oar. And isn't Phryne behaving just like Charybdis, by grabbing the ship-owner and gulping him down, boat and all? Isn't Theano a Siren with no feathers? She looks and sounds like a woman—but she's got the legs of a blackbird!

In the fragment of Anaxilas, the speaker condemns the 'race' of the courtesans by comparing them to mythical creatures with feminine features. In the verses which I have reported, the *hetairai* Nannion, Phryne and Theano are compared respectively to three Odyssean monsters, namely Scylla, Charybdis and the Sirens.[200] The hypotext of the *Odyssey* is here humorously reworked through the metaphorical description of the *hetairai*, who — just like the Homeric monsters — 'capture' their clients and take their money instead of their lives (as it happens in the case of Odysseus' companions). The comparison between Theano and a Siren plays also on the actual nature of the Homeric creatures, who were portrayed as birds with women's faces and with a melodious voice. In the fragment of Sotades we find a cook who boasts about his culinary skills through a long list of fish-based delicacies that he has served to his guests. In vv. 26–9, he describes the preparation of the bonito:

> ἀμίαν τε χήραν, θηρίον καλὸν σφόδρα,

[199] The first (albeit sketchy) analysis of the reuse of epic expressions in the Middle Comedy dates back to Selvers (1909, 20–3). The translations are taken from Olson (2006–12).
[200] Cf. *Od.* 12.235–46 and 12.39–46. Cf. Sanchis Llopis, Montañés Gómez and Pérez Asensio (2007, 284–5) and Stuligrosz (2017, 22–5).

θρίοισι ταύτην ἅλις ἐλᾳδίῳ διεὶς
ἐσπαργάνωσα περιπάσας ὀρίγανον
ἐνέκρυψά θ᾽ ὥσπερ δαλὸν εἰς πολλὴν τέφραν.

As for the neglected bonito, a lovely little creature, I soaked it in just enough olive oil; sprinkled marjoram on top; wrapped it tight in fig-leaves; and hid it in a large heap of coals like a fire-brand.

V. 29 is a reworking of *Od.* 5.488 (ὡς δ᾽ ὅτε τις δαλὸν σποδιῇ ἐνέκρυψε μελαίνῃ), a verse that occurs in a passage in which Odysseus, just arrived to Scheria after suffering a shipwreck, tries to cover his nudity with a heap of leaves. In the Homeric passage, Odysseus' action is compared (vv. 488–91) to that of a man who hides a brand beneath the embers in order to save a seed of fire.[201] It goes without saying that the employment of the epic simile in relation to the cooking of the bonito was comic.

Other two interesting passages are reported by Athenaeus (*Epit.* 1.17c), who quotes two fragments that in all probability echo the Homeric episode (*Od*. 20.287—302) in which Ctesippus, one of the suitors, throws the hoof of a cow at Odysseus while he is disguised as a beggar. The first of such fragments is Aeschylus' fr. 180, which belongs to the play called *Ostologoi*:[202]

ὅδ᾽ ἐστίν, ὅς ποτ᾽ ἀμφ᾽ ἐμοὶ βέλος
γελωτοποιὸν, τὴν κάκοσμον οὐράνην,
ἔρριψεν οὐδ᾽ ἥμαρτε· περὶ δ᾽ ἐμῷ κάρᾳ
πληγεῖσ᾽ ἐναυάγησεν ὀστρακουμένη,
χωρὶς μυρηρῶν τευχέων πνέουσ᾽ ἐμοί

This is the man who once threw in my direction

[201] Cf. *e.g.* Di Giuseppe (2016).
[202] The fragments of Satyr Plays are taken from *TrGF*. The translation of the fragments of Aeschylus is taken from Sommerstein (2009). This has been been considered a part of the so-called 'Odyssean tetralogy', together with *Psychagogoi*, *Penelope* and *Circe*, for a long time, but some scholars have argued that, in the light of the unseemly nature of the fragments, the play must have been a Satyr Play: this would obviously exclude the hypothesis of their belonging to the same tetralogy: cf. *contra* Sommerstein (2009, 178–81) and Lucas de Dios (2008, 512). For the title and a discussion on the content of the play — which was probably focused on the families of the Pretenders who, at the end of the *Odyssey*, turn up to ask for their relatives' bodies — cf. *e.g.* Katsouris (1982), Grossardt (2003) and Lucas de Dios (2008, 511). Cf. Lucas de Dios (2008, 511–15) for a commentary on the fragments of the Satyr Play. Cf. Sommerstein (2009, 178–81) for a conjectural plot summary of the play. These fragments, moreover, share some echoes that seem to corroborate this last hypothesis, such as *e.g.* the use of verb ῥίπτω (fr. 180) and the reference to the hand (fr. 179). The use of the word τεῦχος to indicate the parfume jar may be another proof of the parodic amplification of the passage, since in Homer the word is always attested with the meaning of 'armour' (cf. *e.g. Il.* 14.381).

an object designed to make me a laughing-stock, the evil-smelling chamber-pot,
and he did not miss his aim; it struck me on the head
and smashed into fragments, wafting over me
an odour very unlike that of perfume-jars.

The second is Sophocles' fr. 565, which belongs to the play called *Syndeipnoi*:[203]

ἀλλ᾽ ἀμφὶ θυμῷ τὴν κάκοσμον οὐράνην
ἔρριψεν οὐδ᾽ ἥμαρτε· περὶ δ᾽ ἐμῷ κάρᾳ
κατάγνυται τὸ τεῦχος οὐ μύρου πνέον·
ἐδειματούμην δ᾽ οὐ φίλης ὀσμῆς ὕπο

But in his anger he hurled at me the stinking chamber pot,
nor did he miss; and the vessel, which did not smell of myrrh, broke about my head, and I was shocked by the unpleasing smell.

The two scenes are extremely similar, suggesting that the episode has become a stock scene.[204] In the fragments, the speaker complains about having been hit by a chamber pot thrown by an unknown character.[205] The humour lies in the overturning of the abovementioned epic motif of the failed throw: while in the *Odyssey* the hero is able to dodge the objects thrown at him by his rivals, here the speaker — possibly Odysseus himself — is completely unable to avoid them and he is ignominously hit.[206] A reference to excrement is attested in Aeschylus' fr. 275, which belongs to a play based on the Homeric *Nekyia*, the *Psychagogoi*. In the fragment,Tyresias prophetically warns Odysseus that he will be striken by heron's dung:

ἐρῳδιὸς γὰρ ὑψόθεν ποτώμενος
ὄνθῳ σε πλήξει, νηδύος χαλώμασιν·
ἐκ τοῦδ᾽ ἄκανθα ποντίου βοσκήματος
σήψει παλαιὸν δέρμα καὶ τριχορρυές

For a heron in flight will strike you from above

[203] For the play and a commentary on its fragments, cf. Lucas de Dios (1983, 286–90). The translation of the fragment is taken from Lloyd-Jones (1996).
[204] Palutan (1996, 22–7) has even suggested that it might be plagiarism by Sophocles.
[205] The speaker of the Aeschylus fragment is almost certainly Odysseus (and the 'hurler' might be Ctesippus), while that of Sophocles is unknown.
[206] In Homer, the objects thrown by Odysseus' rivals are always humble ones, but they are never related to human excreta. This motif — together with the scatological nuance — is attested also in the fragment of Hegemon of Thasos. In Aeschylus' fragment, the inherent comic overtone of the scene is confirmed also by the meta-textual adjective γελοτωποιός (v. 2).

with its dung when it opens its bowels;
and from this the barb of a sea-creature
will rot your aged, hairless skin.

Like in the fragment of Aeschylus' *Ostologoi* already analysed, Odysseus is once again the protagonist of an episode characterised by obscene tones. This supports the strong connection between epic parody and aischrology that will be further investigated in the subsequent chapter.

Similar techniques are attested also in the culinary hexameters of Archestratus of Gela.[207] The probable caricature of an epic scene is attested in fr. 11. 3–4:

καὶ λαβὲ πρόσφατον αὐτὸν ἐν εὐκόλποιο Φαλήρου
ἀγκῶσιν ληφθέντ' ἱεροῖς. [...]

And buy them fresh after they have been caught
In the holy arms of Phaleron with its lovely bay.

In this fragment, the adjective πρόσφατον, referred to small-fry, may represent a sophisticated allusion to the famous passage of the *Iliad* (24.757) in which Hecuba, crying over her son's body, employs the term to describe Hector's corpse. In the epic model, πρόσφατον is a hapax: the allusion plays on the analogy between the dead body of the hero and the dead fish just caught by fishermen.

The last caricatural typology entails the structure of the poems. As I have previously argued, the extant poems of classical epic parody seem to be modelled, in various ways, on the structure of epic poems and/or rhapsodic performances. Interestingly, some of the poems analysed in this section show similar features: their overall structure seems to be a parody of that of epic poems. From a structural point of view, for instance, the plot of the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* is based on the parodic reuse of the traditional *Kindheitsmotiv* (*i.e.* the representation of divine childhood), according to which a god's deeds are in plain contrast with his young age.[208] Although unattested in the two extant Homeric poems, the description of the youth of gods and heroes was quite common in Greek mythology (cf. *e.g.* the traditional *res gestae* of

[207] The translations of the fragments of Archestratus are taken from Olson and Sens (2000).
[208] Cf. *e.g.* Bielohlawek (1930, 203–4), Sowa (1984) and Vergados (2013, 29–30).

Heracles): the hymn, therefore, seems to constitute a structural parody of this topos which is attested for lost epic poems. The structure of the *Margites*, too, seems to follow that of epic models, since — as I have explained — the poem consisted in a collection of the humorous *res gestae* of its protagonist, just like other epic poems such as the *Odyssey* or the Homeric hymns.[209]

2.4.3 Linguistic parody

In a previous section of this chapter, I have identified three linguistic techniques employed in the fragments of classical *parōidia* that entail a different playful reuse of epic language and diction. The first one consists in a minimal modification of an epic formula. An early example of this comic technique is offered by the description of Hermes' sandals in the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*. In Homeric epic, the god's sandals are often described in celebrative terms (cf. *e.g. Od.* 5.44–5 ὑπὸ ποσσὶν ἐδήσατο καλὰ πέδιλα | ἀμβρόσια χρύσεια, 'he bound upon his feet the fair sandals, golden and immortal'). In the hymn, the solemn account is amusingly reinterpreted. The reformulation plays on the 'lowering' of a typical attribute of Hermes: instead of his golden sandals, the god wears sandals rudely made of twigs and approximately tightened up with sticking-out branches (vv. 83–4):[210]

> ὑπὸ ποσσὶν ἐδήσατο σάνδαλα κοῦφα
> αὐτοῖσιν πετάλοισι
>
> he bound the light sandals securely on his feet,
> foliage and all

In another passage of the hymn (vv. 155–6), Maia reproaches her son because he has returned home too late. Hermes replies to his mother's accusations with a

[209] This is very common in Greek literature and it is true also of the likely hypotext of the *Margites*: the *Odyssey* is, overall, a description of Odysseus' *res gestae* (with some external insertions). The fact that the *Margites* was named after its protagonist is another epic memory: several epic poems (cf. *e.g.* the *Odyssey*) follow this pattern.

[210] Vergados (2013, 33) has noticed the incongruity of using light sandals to walk in the countryside, but this remark is perhaps too subtle: the humorous focus, here, is on the material of the sandals rather than on their usage, since they might have been quite common among poor people. It is not a coincidence that after wearing the sandals Hermes does not fly as in the Homeric passage but walks like a normal human: this clearly represents another element of 'humanisation' of the god.

reinterpretation of *Il.* 20.200–2, a passage where Aeneas replies to the invitation of Achilles not to engage in duel with him:[211]

> ‘μῆτερ ἐμὴ τί με ταῦτα δεδίσκεαι, ἠΰτε τέκνον
> νήπιον, ὃς μάλα παῦρα μετὰ φρεσὶν αἴσυλα οἶδεν,
> ταρβαλέον, καὶ μητρὸς ὑπαδείδοικεν ἐνιπάς;’
>
> ‘Mother mine, why try to scare me like this, as if I were a baby who knows
> little of mischief, a timorous one afraid of his mother scoldings?’

Besides the intrinsically comic comparison between the threat of Achilles and that of Maia, the passage plays also on the use of the word νήπιος (‘child’): while in the *Iliad* Hector employs the word in metaphorical terms (‘do not take me as a child’), in the hymn Hermes ironically affirms that he is not a νήπιος even if he actually *is* a child.[212] In the very same speech (vv. 174–5), Hermes says:

> εἰ δέ κε μὴ δώῃσι πατὴρ ἐμός, ἦ τοι ἔγωγε
> πειρήσω, δύναμαι, φηλητέων ὄρχαμος εἶναι.
>
> And if my father doesn’t let me, then I shall
> set out — and I have the means — to be the prince of thieves.

These words recall those addressed by Agamemnon to Achilles in *Il.* 1.324–5.[213] In both passages, the speaker wants to obtain the fulfilment of his prerogatives, even if that means using coercive methods, but while in the *Iliad* Agamemnon aims at the possession of Briseis, in the hymn Hermes claims the privileges of his brother Apollo like a whiny child who demands his brother’s toys.[214]

This technique is attested in Aristophanes, too. In *Av.* 576, the comedian slightly changes a Homeric expression to make it comic:[215]

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[211] *Il.* 20.200–2 Πηλεΐδη μὴ δὴ ἐπέεσσί με νηπύτιον ὡς | ἔλπεο δειδίξεσθαι, ἐπεὶ σάφα οἶδα καὶ αὐτὸς | ἠμὲν κερτομίας ἠδ’ αἴσυλα μυθήσασθαι. The same passage recurs in *Il.* 20.431–3, with Hector as the speaking character.
[212] The meaning of the word is quite controversial: cf. *EDG* 1016–17 and Edmunds (1976).
[213] *Il.* 1.324–5 εἰ δέ κε μὴ δώῃσιν ἐγὼ δέ κεν αὐτὸς ἕλωμαι | ἐλθὼν σὺν πλεόνεσσι: ‘and if he will not give her, I must come in person to take her with many behind me’.
[214] Cf. Zanetto (1996, 268) and Richardson (2007, 86–8).
[215] The translations of Aristophanes’ *Birds* are taken from Henderson (2000). Another example is attested in *Nub.* 584–6: cf. *e.g.* Magnelli (2004, 161).

ὁ Ζεὺς δ᾽ ἡμῖν οὐ βροντήσας πέμψει πτερόεντα κεραυνόν;

And won't Zeus thunder at us and hurl his 'winged lightning bolt'?

The expression πτερόεντα κεραυνόν is an 'ornithological' parody of the epic expression ψολόεντα κεραυνόν (cf. *e.g. Od*. 23.330, 24.539, Hes. *Th*. 515).[216] Likewise, in v. 835 of the same comedy, the form Ἄρεως νεοττός ('chick of Ares') is an ironic reworking of the Iliadic expression ὄζος Ἄρηος ('scion of Ares').[217] In *Eq.* 74–5, Cleon's depiction is an ironic reworking of the epic description of the Sun:[218]

ἀλλ᾽ οὐχ οἷόν τε τὸν Παφλαγόν᾽ οὐδὲν λαθεῖν·
ἐφορᾷ γὰρ οὗτος πάντ᾽.

But nothing can get past Paphlagon;
he keeps an eye on everything.

In *Lys.* 516–20, Lysistrata speaks of women's inferior condition and of the bad treatment reserved by men to those women who dare to interfere with them in matters of warfare. She recounts that, every time she tried to give advice, her husband would quote the Iliadic expression πόλεμος δ᾽ἀνδρέσσι μελήσει ('but the men must see to the fighting') attested in the last meeting between Hector and Andromache in *Il.* 6.492.[219] In addition, a few verses later (v. 538), the same Homeric sentence is playfully turned upside down with a change in gender: the epic verse becomes πόλεμος δὲ γυναιξὶ μελήσει ('but the women must see to the fighting'). In v. 392 of the *Thesmophoriazousae*, Aristophanes plays on the Homeric adjective παρθενοπίπης ('seducer', cf. *Il.* 11.385) by making up the adjective οἰνοπίπας ('gaping after wine').[220]

[216] Cf. *e.g.* Dunbar (1995, 386–7).
[217] Cf. Dunbar (1995, 337) and Grilli (2006, 277). Here the humour is also based on the fact that the 'chick of Ares' is described as a ὄρνις … δεινότατος ('very fearsome bird', vv. 833–5).
[218] *Od.* 11.109 Ἠελίου, ὃς πάντ᾽ ἐφορᾷ καὶ πάντ᾽ ἐπακούει. Cf. Sommerstein (1981, 148). The translations of Aristophanes' *Knights* are taken from Henderson (1998a).
[219] The humour of this expression does not lie only in the actual incompetence demonstrated by men in dealing with martial affairs — which contrasts with the content of the expression — but also in the bathetic, implicit comparison between Lysistrata and her husband and the epic married couple.
[220] Cf. *e.g.* Austin and Olson (2008).

The bathetic reuse of epic words and expressions is attested also in Archestratus' poem. In fr. 16 (vv. 6–9), Archestratus affirms that mortals cannot eat nor even see the boar-fish:

> […] ὅσοι μὴ πλεκτὸν ὕφασμα
> σχοίνου ἑλειοτρόφου κοῖλον χείρεσσιν ἔχοντες
> εἰώθασι δονεῖν ψήφους αἴθωνι λογισμῷ
> κἄρθρων μηλείων ἐπὶ γῆν δωρήματα βάλλειν.
>
> [...] except for those who hold in their hands,
> a hollow, twisted weaving made of marsh-raised rush
> and are accostumed to whirl pebbles about with brilliant calculation
> and to throw the grift of sheep's limbs on the ground.

In these verses, the word ἑλειοτρόφος ('marsh-raised') qualifies the rush.[221] It has been noticed that the adjective may be modelled on the epic form ἑλεόθρεπτον ('marsh-reared', cf. *Il.* 2.766), attested in relation to the pasture of the Myrmidons' horses.[222] In addition, the expression παίδεσσιν Ἰώνων in fr. 47. 4 is build on the epic expression υἷες Ἀχαιῶν (cf. *e.g. Il.* 1.162).[223]

The second technique consists in the mixture of epic and vulgar language. In the archaic period this technique is predominantly attested in the works of Hipponax, who often mixes epic and prosaic formulas for comic purposes. In particular, linguistic parody is explicitly attested in frr. 1–2, two poems that feature Hermes:[224]

> ἔβωσε Μαίης παῖδα, Κυλλήνης πάλμυν
>
> He called upon Maia's son, sire of Cyllene
>
> Ἑρμῆ κυνάγχα, μηιονιστὶ Κανδαῦλα,
> φωρῶν ἑταῖρε, δεῦρό μοι σκαπαρδεῦσαι

[221] The verses contain several epic nuances and their meaning is still debated: cf. Olson (2000, 81–5).
[222] For the same technique cf. also fr. 30. 2, where Archestratus suggests avoiding buying big bullheads by changing slightly the epic formula ἐπὶ χεῖρας ἴαλλε — which is used to describe characters who lay their hands on food — into ἀπὸ χεῖρας ἴαλλε. The change of ἐπί in ἀπό is humorous because the fish in question is full of toxic spines and the characters are supposed to handle it carefully: the epic model, therefore, is reused in a bathetic meaning.
[223] Cf. Olson (2000, 193).
[224] Frr. 1–2 were probably contiguous: cf. *e.g.* Degani (1991). Hermes is often mocked in the poem of Hipponax. It is not a coincidence, perhaps, that the god is frequently the protagonist of parodic poems, just as in the previously mentioned frr. 10–11: his inherent nature of 'trickster' surely fostered his presence in humorous compositions.

Hermes dog-throttler, Candaules in Maeonian,
companion of thieves, come here and give me a hand

In the poems, an unidentified character invokes the help of the god.[225] The (ironic) traditional *klēsis* to the god is performed through the mixture of Homeric words (such as the Homeric verb βοάω 'to shout') with foreign and vulgar terms: in fr. 1, the invocation begins with the solemn expression Μαίης παῖδα, but it ends up with the unexpected Lydian word πάλμυν ('king'); in fr. 2, the solemn incipit (Ἑρμῆ κυνάγχα) is followed by the Meonian (μηιονιστὶ) epithet Κανδαῦλα.[226] In the second verse of fr. 2, moreover, the epic expression δεῦρό μοι (cf. e.g. *Il.* 3.130) explicitly contrasts with the unrefined reference to the ancient popular game called σκαπέρδα.

This technique is intensively employed by comedians too. In several fragments of Epicharmus, for instance, Homeric formulas are mixed with or even rewritten in the Sicilian dialect.[227] This combination of epic language and Sicilian dialect is detectable in the poorly preserved fr. 113, in which a Homeric verse is reworked in the Doric dialect: the expression ἀφρ]άτωρ ἀθέμ[ιστος ἀ]νίστιος ('without brotherhood, outlaw, homeless) in v. 415 is an explicit allusion to the Homeric verses of *Il*. 9.63–4.[228] Likewise, vv. 9–11 of fr. 40 are a humorous reworking in the Doric dialect of the epic expression found for example in *Il.* 1.403–4, in which Achilles reminds his mother Thetis of her role in summoning the monster of the hundred arms called Briareus (by the gods) or Aegaeon (by mankind) to defend Zeus against the rebellion of Hera, Poseidon and Athena:[229]

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[225] A similar invocation, characterised by epic reminiscences and funny tones, is attested in frr. 42a–b.
[226] The epithet κυνάγχα (literally 'dog-throttler') has perhaps some comic nuances: cf. Degani (1991, 24). The comic portrayal of another god that plays with the Homeric language is attested in fr. 105, which is likely to represent a parodic allusion to the labours of Heracles (cf. *e.g.* Degani 2007, 124).
[227] One might argue that the use of the Sicilian dialect was determined by the geographical provenience of Epicharmus and that his audience was accostumed to hear Homer recited in that dialect. In some passages, however, Epicharmus uses Homer in a rough form of the Ionic dialect; this means that his Doric reworking of Homer had a playful purpose.
[228] *Il.* 9.63–4 ἀφρήτωρ ἀθέμιστος ἀνέστιός ἐστιν ἐκεῖνος | ὃς πολέμου ἔραται ἐπιδημίου ὀκρυόεντος. Cf. *e.g.* Magnelli (2004, 158) and Tosetti (2018, 577). The verse is interesting also because it may be — together with fr. 121 (and, perhaps, 224) — the only surviving hexameter by Epicharmus (cf. *infra* p. 157). Interestingly, the very same verse of Homer occurs in Ar. *Pax* 1097–8 (cf. *infra* pp. 119–20): this proves that some Homeric passages and verses were more famous than others and, therefore, they were more often exploited for parodic purposes.
[229] *Il.* 1.403–4 ὅν Βριάρεων καλέουσι θεοί, ἄνδρες δε τε πάντες | Αἰγαίων'. For Homeric forms attested in Epicarmus' fragments, cf. Rodríguez-Noriega Guillén (1996, 84–5) and Tosetti (2018, 76). The elevated tone of the expression is given also by the hapax compound ἀνδροφυκτίδας at the end of v. 10. In another fragment, the poorly preserved fr. 97, Epicharmus mixes epic forms such as κλέος θεῖον

Θάτεραι δὲ γάιαι κόγχοι τε κἀμαθίτιδες
ταὶ κακοδόκιμοί τε κηὔωνοι, τὰς ἀνδροφυκτίδας
πάντες ἄνθρωποι καλέονθ', ἀμὲς δὲ λεύκας τοὶ θεοί

and others that live on land, both conchs and sand-dwellers, which
have a bad reputation and are inexpensive, and which all human beings refer
to as *androphuktides*, whereas we gods call them white conchs.

This same technique is attested also in the works of Cratinus.[230] In his fr. 147, two characters — in all probability, Odysseus and Polyphemus — are talking; the Cyclops, unaware of the identity of the interlocutor, asks the hero about the whereabouts of Laertes' son:

{A.}ποῦ ποτ᾽ εἶδες μοι τὸν ἄνδρα, Λαέρτα φίλον | παῖδ᾽;
{B.}Πάρῳ, σικυὸν μέγιστον σπερματίαν | ὠνούμενον.

(A) Where did you once see the man, Laertes' dear son?
(B) On Paros, buying a jumbo-sized pumpkin.

The humour of this scene is based on the sharp contrast between the linguistic register used by Polyphemus and Odysseus respectively: while the Cyclops speaks in an epic-like style, Odysseus uses vulgar language to portray himself in the third person in a very daily, un-heroical activity.[231] The contrast is fostered also by the overturning of

('immortal glory', v. 13), δίοις Ἀχαιοῖς ('to the noble Greeks') and παιδὶ Ἀτρέος φίλῳ ('to my friend, son of Atreus', v. 15) with colloquial (and dialectal) expressions such as τουτόνη (v. 1), ἢ ὅτι (v. 3), ἀλοιῆσθαι ('to be thrashed', v. 6): cf. *e.g.* Tosetti (2018, 445–67).

[230] Despite the large use of epic parody in the corpus of Cratinus, the name of Homer is never attested in his fragments and/or testimonia: cf. already Scherrans (1893) and Magnelli (2004, 158). The fact that Cratinus knew very well 'secondary' Homeric poems is proved by his mention of the *Margites* in fr. 368: cf. *e.g.* Olson and Seaberg (2018, 188–9). Further evidence that Cratinus parodied Homer is provided by fr. inc. fab. 355, in which the Neoplatonic philosopher Porphyry (*ap.* Eus. *PE* 10.3.21) affirms that Cratinus mocked Homer for its excessive use of the expression τὸν δ'ἀπαμειβόμενος ('and in response to him'): the evidence seems to disclose Cratinus' criticism of the formularity (and, consequently, the 'repetitiveness') of epic language. On this passage, whose comic technique closely recalls the episode of the *lekythion* in Aristophanes' *Frogs*, cf. *e.g.* Quaglia (2007, 248–9) and Olson and Seaberg (2018, 151). The translations of Cratinus' fragments are taken from Storey (2011).

[231] The elevated language of Polyphemus is proved by the use of the epic patronymic Λαέρτα (v. 1). He might also be the speaker who refers to Odysseus' companions with the verb ἀλυσκάζω ('to take cover', 'shun'), a predominantly epic verb (cf. *e.g. Od.* 17.581), in fr. 148.

the expectations of the audience: Polyphemus, a horrific monster, speaks more sophisticatedly than Odysseus, a hero who is famous for his eloquence.[232]

The third linguistic technique exploited by epic parody is the employment of an epic word or expression with a different meaning. The *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* contains a representative occurrence of this technique in two verses (vv. 277, 311) in which Hermes, rejecting his brother's accusations, pronounces the words τὸ δὲ κλέος οἶον ἀκούω ('I have only heard talk of them'), a play on *Il.* 2.486.[233] In the Homeric hypotext, these words are employed by the poet in his invocation to the Muses, just before the *Catalogue of Ships*: through them, the poet implicitly admits the distance between his own human grasp and the Muses' divine knowledge of such things, thus highlighting his detachment from the deeds that he is about to describe.[234] In the hymn, on the other hand, Hermes uses these same words to reject Apollo's accusations, acting as a child who tries to disavow his infantile pranks.[235]

The longest instance of this kind of parody, however, is attested in Aristophanes' *Peace*. In vv. 1270–93, a boy goes on stage and begins to recite epic verses to try out a motif for the marriage of Trygaeus and Opora.[236] The humour of the passage derives from Trygaeus' misunderstanding of the epic words. In v. 1270, for instance, the word ὁπλοτέρων ('younger'), a term that plays on the similarity with the word ὅπλα ('weapons'), makes Trygaeus — a staunch pacifist who has fought for peace — startle

[232] In fr. 145 (τῇ νῦν τόδε πῖθι λαβὼν ἥδη, καὶ τοὔνομά μ᾽ εὐθὺς ἐρώτα, 'Now take and drink this, then ask me my name'), the utterance of Odysseus is a sort of pastiche of two different Homeric formulas attested in *Od.* 9.347 (Κύκλωψ, τῇ, πίε οἶνον, ἐπεὶ φάγες ἀνδρόμεα κρέα) and 9.355 (δός μοι ἔτι πρόφρων καί μοι τεὸν οὔνομα εἰπέ), the former pronounced by Odysseus (who offers wine of Maron to Polyphemus), the latter by Polyphemus (who wants to know the name of Odysseus). In Cratinus' fragment, Odysseus 'steals' the line of the Cyclops and humorously 'anticipates' his question, thus playing with the expectations of the audience by 'anticipating' the plot of his own life. Cf. *e.g.* Quaglia (2007, 257).

[233] *Il.* 2.486 ἡμεῖς δὲ κλέος οἶον ἀκούομεν οὐδέ τι ἴδμεν.

[234] Cf. *e.g.* Barmeyer (1968) and Pucci (1998, 36–48).

[235] In v. 429, Hermes honours Mnemosyne: this is implicitly ironic because he had claimed before that he remembered nothing about the cattle. The humour is emphasised also by the fact that in the poem Hermes embodies an epic bard (cf. vv. 54–61, 425–33).

[236] On this passage, cf. *e.g.* Compton-Engle (1999), Macía Aparicio (2000, 226–37), Kloss (2001, 86–9) and De Sario (2017, 96–7). The verses are all hexameters with the exception of vv. 1284–5, 1290 (iambic trimeters) and 1291 (extrametrical); two additional hexameters are attested in vv. 1300–1. These iambic insertions in a hexametric structure may prove, as I will argue in the fourth chapter of this work, that in parodic passages this metrical combination was common. The structure of this agon, by the way, reflects the practice of rhapsodic competitions in the classical age: cf. *e.g.* Griffith (1990), Collins (2001a; 2001b), Graziosi (2010, 126–7). Some evidence of hexametric verses in Aristophanes is (or might be) attested *e.g.* in frr. 29 (oracular), 267 (with a gastronomic and exotic reference), 284 (concerning a parasite), 383 (concerning a table game): cf. Parker (1997, 53).

and stop the boy (v. 1271–3). In v. 1286a, the boy uses the verb θωρήσσω in its epic meaning ('to arm oneself with a θώραξ, *i.e.* a corslet'), but Trygaeus misunderstands it by interpreting the verb with its other meaning of 'fortifying with drink', 'making drunk', an act in line with his party mood.[237] Besides these entertaining plays on words, this passage is significant for two other reasons. First, the depiction of a boy who is able to improvise with epic verses gives us additional evidence for the fact that the Greek — or, better, Athenian — education system was firmly grounded in the study of the epic tradition.[238] Second, the passage constitutes an interesting synthesis of the bidirectional nature of the parodic mechanism, which can be employed to criticise the model or an 'external' object (in which case the model becomes a mere instrument). In this passage, Homer is at the same time the instrument and the target of parody: on the one hand, the epic language is used for the description of a vulgar subject, an aspect which proves once again the popularity of the reuse of Homeric formulas for the description of food or drink; on the other hand, he criticises the verses of the boy for their militaristic content and thus implicitly the whole tone of the epic poems.[239] Sometimes, Aristophanes' characters openly state the Homeric origins of their words when they quote epic passages. This is the case, for instance, of the passage in the *Peace* in which Trygaeus turns the oracular language against Hierokles, a charlatan soothsayer who had previously tried to get a share of the sacrifice that the protagonist and his slave were setting up (vv. 1052–126).[240] In this passage, Trygaeus quotes a cento of Homeric verses twice (vv. 1089–94, 1096–8):[241]

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[237] For a list of the Homeric passages employed in the text, cf. *e.g.* Di Sario (2007, 97–8) and Olson and Sens (1998, 306–9). The verses are sometimes purely Homeric (cf. *e.g.* v. 1273 = *e.g. Il.* 3.15), sometimes pastiches of dactylic hemistichs, sometimes vaguer Homeric echoes.

[238] It is not a coincidence that the first verse recited by the boy is the incipit of a poem, the most memorable portion of a poem. The poem is Antimachus' *Epigoni*, which belongs to the Epic Cycle and was attributed to Homer in the fifth century BC. This is another proof that, even if the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were surely the most famous and popular poems, the other lost poems of the Epic Cycle were well known too and could be, therefore, the object and the instrument of parody. From this point of view, parody may represent, reversely, the 'litmus test' of the popularity of a poem. Moreover, this supports the arguments on the influence of the traditional scholastic system on the diffusion of epic parody: the incipit were indeed the most widespread verses at a scholastic level.

[239] In *Nub.* 1055–7, the Wrong Argument takes apart the reasoning of the Better Argument by playing on the change of meaning of the word ἀγορά in Homer ('place of the assembly', 'downtown', 'marketplace').

[240] On this passage, cf. *e.g.* Kloss (2001, 71–5).

[241] Vv. 1063–114 are in dactylic hexameters, the metre employed in oracular language. This is attested also in other plays: cf. *e.g. Eq.* 197–201, 960–1099, *Pax* 1269–93, *Av.* 967–88, *Lys*. 770–6, fr. 29: cf. Kloss (2001, 70–89). Aristophanes' oracles have been widely researched: cf. *e.g.* Muecke (1998) and

ὅνπερ κάλλιστον δήπου πεποίηκεν Ὅμηρος·
‘ὣς οἱ μὲν νέφος ἐχθρὸν ἀπωσάμενοι πολέμοιο
Εἰρήνην εἵλοντο καὶ ἱδρύσανθ᾽ ἱερείῳ.
αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ κατὰ μῆρ᾽ ἐκάη καὶ σπλάγχν᾽ ἐπάσαντο,
ἔσπενδον δεπάεσσιν, ἐγὼ δ᾽ ὁδὸν ἡγεμόνευον·’
χρησμολόγῳ δ᾽ οὐδεὶς ἐδίδου κώθωνα φαεινόν.

The very fine one that Homer composed, of course:
‘Thus casting away the detestable vapor of warfare,
they opted for Peace and with a victim established her.
And when the thighs were burnt and the innards devoured,
they poured libation from cups, and I led the way’
but to the oracle monger no one passed a gleaming goblet!

ἀλλ᾽ ὁ σοφός τοι νὴ Δί᾽ Ὅμηρος δεξιὸν εἶπεν·
‘ἀφρήτωρ, ἀθέμιστος, ἀνέστιός ἐστιν ἐκεῖνος,
ὃς πολέμου ἔραται ἐπιδημίου ὀκρυόεντος.’

But here’s something the sage Homer said that, by god, is well put:
‘Clanless, lawless, hearthless is that man
who lusts for the horror of warfare among his own people.’[242]

The humour of the passage derives from the discrepancy between the epic language of the quotation and its context: Trygaeus is using epic language to drive away Hierokles, a charlatan and parasite seer.[243] In Ar. *Av.* vv. 572–5, Peisetaerus humorously lists some ‘winged’ gods (Hermes, Victory, Cupid and Iris) to prove (paradoxically) the godly nature of the birds. When it comes to Iris, he quotes a Homeric expression attested in v. 114 of the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*:[244]

Bellocchi (2009). An interesting aspect of these hexameters is that the single verses are recited by two different people, a characteristic which is unattested in epic poems: this element proves the ability of Aristophanes to play with the Homeric language, bending the epic metre to theatrical, dialogic needs. For the Homeric verses used in this *cento,* cf. De Sario (2017, 96 n. 269). For a general overview of Homeric *centos*, cf. Salanitro (1994, 761–77) and Usher (1997; 1998).

[242] The translation is taken from Sommerstein (2001).

[243] The humour, here, is based also on the fact that Trygaeus, a simple winegrower, replies to Hierokles in epic language, fighting fire with fire. In vv. 1089–94, the humour derives also from the *aprosdoketon* of v. 1094, which twists the Homeric quotation into an attack *ad personam* against the interlocutor.

[244] The reference to the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* additionally proves that the Homeric corpus was employed for parodic purposes. For a deeper analysis of this passage and further Homeric allusions, cf. *e.g.* Dunbar (1995, 263–5) and Grilli (2006, 248). Homer is an agonal topic in several plays: cf. *e.g. Nu*. 1056, *Pax* 1089, *Ra.* 1034. This is proved also by fr. 233, in which Homeric glosses are interspersed with Solonian ones to test somebody’s preparation: the verses confirm that Homeric glosses and their interpretation were a crucial part of elementary schooling (cf. p. 189, n. 496). For a commentary on the poem, cf. *e.g.* Cassio (1977, 75–7).

ΠΕ. ληρεῖς. καὶ νὴ Δί᾽ ὅ γ᾽ Ἑρμῆς
πέτεται θεὸς ὢν πτέρυγάς τε φορεῖ, κἄλλοι γε θεοὶ πάνυ πολλοί.
αὐτίκα Νίκη πέτεται πτερύγοιν χρυσαῖν καὶ νὴ Δί᾽ Ἔρως γε·
Ἶριν δέ γ᾽ Ὅμηρος ἔφασκ᾽ ἰκέλην εἶναι τρήρωνι πελείῃ.

(Peisetaerus) That's nonsense! Why, Hermes certainly flies around and sports wings, and he's a god, and so do a great many other gods; Victory, for example, flies on golden wings, and so does Cupid, and Homer pronounced Iris to be 'like to a trembling dove.'

In *Av.* 904, a parasitic poet enters on stage and describes himself twice with Homeric language.[245] The humour of the scene derives from the fact that epic language is used by a parasite and by the answer given by Peisetaerus, who mocks the elevated epic style of the intruder by misunderstanding, on purpose, its meaning (vv. 915–16).[246] A similar occurrence is attested in Ar. fr. 94, which is dubiously attributed to Aristophanes. In this fragment, the adjective ἄμφηκες ('two-edged'), commonly used to describe the two edges of weapons (cf. *e.g. Il.* 21.118), is re-functionalised to describe the word 'jaw', which in that context works as a metonymy for language: ἄμφηκες· ἤτοι ἀμφοτέρωθεν ἠκονημένον, ὥσπερ καὶ Ἀριστοφάνης εἶπεν ἀμφήκη γνάθον, ('two-edged: sharpened on each side, and as Aristophanes said, 'two-edged jaw').

Another notable occurrence of this technique is attested in the Middle Comedy, namely in fr. 1 of Strato Comicus, in which a man complains about the haughty cook whom he has hired to prepare a banquet.[247] The cook employs Homeric vocabulary to refer to food and is therefore impossible to understand:[248]

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[245] Vv. 909–10 ἐγὼ μελιγλώσσων ἐπέων ἰεὶς ἀοιδὰν | Μουσάων θεράπων ὀτρηρός ('I am he that launches a song of honey-tongued | verses, the Muses' eager vassal') and 913–14 οὔκ, ἀλλὰ πάντες ἐσμὲν οἱ διδάσκαλοι | Μουσάων θεράποντες ὀτρηροί ('no, we master singers all are | the Muses' eager vassals').

[246] Cf. *e.g.* Di Sario (2007, 97). For the humour of the passage, cf. *e.g.* Macía Aparicio (1998, 208). It should be noticed that vv. 909–10 and 913–14 are probably a reference to the verses of the *Margites*: once again, this proves the connection between archaic epic parody and Old Comedy.

[247] Strato Comicus has been sometimes considered a poet of the New Comedy (cf. *e.g.* Arnott *OCD* 1406 *s.v.* Straton [2]), but the *Suda* σ1184 reports him as a poet of the Middle Comedy. By including this fragment in this work, I follow the information reported by the ancient sources.

[248] The fragment is transmitted by several sources and has a complex *constitutio textus*: cf. Olson (2006–12, vol. 4 269 n. 82) and Sanchis Llopis, Montañés Gómez and Pérez Asensio (2007, 514–15). I report the text printed by Olson (2006–12). For a commentary on the passage, cf. Olson (2007, 164–8). Another source of the fragment, namely *P. Cair.* 65445 185–215 (II), reports three additional verses: it is interesting to notice that in one of these verses (v. 49), the *mageiros* is said to have been the slave of

σφίγγ᾽ ἄρρεν᾽, οὐ μάγειρον, εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν
ceἴληφ᾽. ἁπλῶς γὰρ οὐδὲ ἕν, μὰ τοὺς θεούς,
ὧν ἂν λέγῃ συνίημι· καινὰ ῥήματα
πεπορισμένος πάρεστιν. ὡς εἰσῆλθε γάρ,
εὐθύς μ᾽ ἐπηρώτησε προσβλέψας μέγα·
“πόσους κέκληκας μέροπας ἐπὶ δεῖπνον; λέγε.”
“ἐγὼ κέκληκα Μέροπας ἐπὶ δεῖπνον; χολᾷς.
τοὺς δὲ Μέροπας τούτους με γινώσκειν δοκεῖς;
οὐδεὶς παρέσται· τοῦτο γάρ, νὴ τὸν Δία,
ἔστι κατάλοιπον, Μέροπας ἐπὶ δεῖπνον καλεῖν.”
“οὐδ᾽ ἄρα παρέσται δαιτυμὼν οὐδεὶς ὅλως;”
“οὐκ οἶομαί γε. Δαιτυμών;” ἐλογιζόμην·
“ἥξει Φιλῖνος, Μοσχίων, Νικήρατος,
ὁ δεῖν᾽, ὁ δεῖνα.” κατ᾽ ὄνομ᾽ ἀνελογιζόμην·
οὐκ ἦν ἐν αὐτοῖς οὐδὲ εἷς μοι Δαιτυμών.
“οὐδεὶς παρέσται,” φημί. “τί λέγεις; οὐδὲ εἷς;”
σφόδρ᾽ ἠγανάκτησ᾽ ὥσπερ ἠδικημένος
εἰ μὴ κέκληκα Δαιτυμόνα. καινὸν πάνυ.
“οὐδ᾽ ἄρα θύεις ἐρυσίχθον᾽;” “οὐκ,” ἔφην, “ἐγώ.”
“βοῦν δ᾽ εὐρυμέτωπον;” “οὐ θύω βοῦν, ἄθλιε.”
“μῆλα θυσιάζεις ἆρα;” “μὰ Δί᾽, ἐγὼ μὲν οὔ,
οὐδέτερον αὐτῶν, προβάτιον δ᾽.” “οὔκουν,” ἔφη,
“τὰ μῆλα πρόβατα;” “<μῆλα πρόβατ᾽;> οὐ μανθάνω,
<μάγειρε,> τούτων οὐδέν, οὐδὲ βούλομαι.

I’ve taken a male Sphinx into my house,
not a cook! By the gods, I don’t understand
a single word he says. He’s here with a full supply
of strange vocabulary. The minute he entered the house,
he immediately looked me in the eye and asked in a loud voice:
“How many *meropes* have you invited to dinner? Tell me!”
“I’ve invited the Meropes to dinner? You’re crazy;
do you think I know these Meropes?
None of them’ll be there. By Zeus, this is
too much—inviting Meropes to dinner!”
“So isn’t a single *daitumōn* going to be present?”
“I don’t think so. Daitumōn?” I did a count:
“Philinus is coming, and Moschion, and Niceratus,
and so-and-so, and so-and-so.” I went through them, name
by name; I didn’t have a single Daitumōn among them.
“No Daitumōn’ll be there,” I said. “What do you mean? Not one?”
He got real irritated, as if I was treating him badly
because I hadn’t invited Daitumōn. Very strange.
“Aren’t you sacrificing an earthbreaker?” “No, I’m not,” I said.

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a ῥαψῳδοτοιούτου τινός (‘a certain quasi-rhapsode’): this represents another source on the bad fame of ‘boastful intellectuals’ that the rhapsodes held in the classical period: cf. *infra* pp. 183–4.

"A cow with a wide forehead?" "I'm not sacrificing a cow, you bastard."
"So you're making a sacrifice of *mēla*?" "No, by Zeus, I'm not.
Neither of these—just a little sheep." "Aren't *mēla* sheep?",
he said. "Apples are sheep? I don't understand
any of this, cook," I said, "and I don't want to.

In this portion of the fragment, we find several Homeric expressions employed by the cook who are misunderstood by the host of the dinner party. In v. 6 and 11, for instance, the *mageiros* uses the epic words μέροψ ('mortal') and δαιτυμών ('guest') to refer to the guests, but the speaker erroneously thinks that he is referring to personal names, thus leading to a comic effect.[249] In the following lines (vv. 19–24), the cook asks the host about the animals he intends to sacrifice. Here Strato makes a pun on the word μῆλον, which in epic frequently refers to oxen (cf. *e.g. Il.* 12.301), but had also the meaning of 'apple': while the cook is using in the word in its epic sense, the host does not understand why he should sacrifice an apple.[250]

The linguistic technique of employing epic words with a different meaning or in an incongruous context is well attested also in the fragments of Archestratus.[251] A representative example is attested on two occasions in the first six verses of fr. 5 and in fr. 10:

πρῶτα μὲν οὖν δώρων μεμνήσομαι ἠυκόμοιο
Δήμητρος, φίλε Μόσχε: σὺ δ᾽ ἐν φρεσὶ βάλλεο σῇσιν.
ἔστι γὰρ οὖν τὰ κράτιστα λαβεῖν βέλτιστά τε πάντων,
εὐκάρπου κριθῆς καθαρῶς ἠσσημένα πάντα,
ἐν Λέσβῳ κλεινῆς Ἐρέσου περικύμονι μαστῷ, 9
λευκότερ᾽ αἰθερίης χιόνος. […]

First of all, then, my dear Moschos, I will mention the gifts of fair-haired
Demeter; and you must internalise all of this.
the best one can get and the finest of all,
all sifted clean from highly productive barley,

[249] The first term is an obscure epic word which is used as epiteth for human beings (cf. *e.g. Il.* 1.250, *Od.* 20.49). As for δαιτυμών cf. *e.g. Od.* 4.621, 7.102.
[250] The pompous use of Homeric words also occurs in v. 20, where the *mageiros* employs the epic expression βοῦν δ᾽ εὐρυμέτωπον ('a cow with wide forehead', cf. *e.g. Il.* 10.92 and *Od*. 382), in v. 38, where he mocks the host by calling him ἀτάσθαλος ('wicked', cf. *e.g. Il.* 22.418) and in v. 42 (cf. Olson 2007, 167). There might be a comic reuse of epic vocabulary in v. 19: the word ἐρυσίχθον may indeed play on the usual epiteth of Poseidon, ἐνοσίχθων ('earth-shaker'): cf. *e.g.* Livrea (1980, 28). An analogous pun occurs in vv. 35–7, when the cook employs the epic word πήγος (literally 'solid') as a metonymy for 'salt': cf. *e.g.* Olson (2007, 166).
[251] Together with the passage that I will analyse, one may recall also frr. 30, 2, 32, 5 and 39, 7.

are in Lesbos, on the wave-girt breast where famous Eresos is located
whiter than heavenly snow. […]

οὐ μὴν ἀλλὰ κλέος γ᾽ ἀρετῆς μέγα κάρτα φέρουσι
Κωπαῖαι καὶ Στρυμόνιαι· [...]

And yet Kopaic and Strymonian eels have great reputation
for quality [...]

In the first fragment we find the ironic reworking of the stereotypical epic formula for the invocation to the Muse(s), as confermed by the verb μεμνήσομαι and — more in general — by the pervasive epic diction of the two verses.[252] In v. 6, the barley is described as λευκότερ᾽αἰθερίης χιόνος (‘whiter than heavenly snow’), an expression originally attested in Homer for the description of Rhesus’ horses. Likewise, in fr. 10. 5 the word κλέος (‘glory’) — which is commonly used in epic to define the glory of heroes — ironically describes eels.[253]

2.5 Conclusions

In this chapter, I have investigated the humour of epic parody. In the first part of the chapter, I have pointed out that the ancient Greeks were already well aware both of the humorous and of the dialogic nature of parody. This has been demonstrated by three ancient sources whose analysis has confirmed that the connection between parody and humour — today essentially established — was indeed already well perceived by the ancient Greeks and that they were also acquainted with the peculiar comic mechanism which stands at the basis of parody, *i.e.* incongruence. Despite the scarcity of surviving

[252] Cf. *e.g,* the ending in -οιο (ἠυκόμοιο, v. 1) and the expression ἐν φρεσὶ βάλλεο σῇσιν in v. 2 (‘and you must internalise all of this’): cf. Olson and Sens (2000, 21–37). In general, the whole incipit seems to allude to that of the *Homeric Hymn to Demetra*: this is perfectly understandable, since what is later described is barley, obviously related to the goddess of agricolture. Cf. also fr. 37. 6 for another similarly playful use of the verb μιμνήσκω: cf Olson and Sens (2000, 157). In fr. 6. 1, the imperative ἔστω recalls the Hesiodic imperatives attested in the *Works and Days*.

[253] As Olson and Sens recall (2000, 51), this word in epic is frequently attested together with the adverb μέγα*,* just as in this passage. In addition, the epic allusion is supported also by the reference to ἀρετή, another word strictly connected with epic values. Another example of this technique consists in the word ἀμφίκομος (literally ‘thick-leafed’) in fr. 11. 7: the word, a Homeric hapax in *Il.* 17.677, has the meaning of ‘with leaves all around’ and qualifies a θάμνος (‘bush’), but Archestratus uses it to describe sea-nettles.

poems belonging to the genre, in the second part I have underlined the most important typologies of comic techniques attested in the poems of classical epic parody, pointing out that all these techniques are ultimately grounded on a mechanism of incongruence. Whether the parodists employed epic models for bathetic depictions and caricatures of epic subjects and patterns, or whether they made humorous variations of epic diction, they ultimately all produced humour by playing with epic stereotypes and hypotexts. In the third part of this chapter, I have traced these peculiar techniques back in earlier and contemporary poems to show that the epic tradition was a major object of comic reformulations way before the formalisation of epic parody in a clear-cut genre and that the techniques employed to achieve this goal were the same used by the authors of classical epic parody.

Chapter 3
Epic Parody and Popular Culture

3.1 Introduction

In his ground-breaking anthropological and sociological research on the Medieval and Renaissance Carnival, Bakhtin has underlined the close relationship between parody and popular culture. According to Bakhtin, Carnival brought about a temporary liberation from the status quo and from hierarchic relationships in favour of a celebration of human equality and created a space where people could live a sort of 'second life'. During Carnival, the formal, official structures of society were not destroyed, but temporarily toppled in a multivocal, dialogic 'upside-down world' that encompassed the complexities of the world in contrast with the univocal nature of everyday life and routine. In his opinion, the dialectic view on reality expressed by 'Carnival culture' was primarily embodied, from a literary perspective, in the dialogism of parody, which formally preserves the status quo — *i.e.* the formal features of its model — but overturns and lowers the essential content of its target. In other terms, Bakhtin argues that parody can be considered as the 'literary alter ego' of Carnival, as it lowers the *literary* status quo of its model in a dialectic process that ultimately enriches our understanding of reality. In addition, Bakhtin has stressed that every literary genre 'filters' reality through a set of semiotic tools that allow the representation of only some aspects of the world, in accordance with an axiological system that belongs to the genre itself and not to reality. Parody unmasks this partial 'literary assimilation' of reality, thus setting itself on a level that is external to the historical system of literary genres. In other words, parody debunks the unilateral nature of a literary genre thanks to its being external to the literary system itself: from this advantage point it is able to underline the complexity of reality which is hidden by the paradigm of each individual literary genre and by its intrinsic structures. To disclose its inherent dialectic power, parody regularly exploits popular elements that are constitutionally perceived as alien to 'high' culture. Bakhtin's considerations on parody can be applied in connection with the relationship between popular culture and

Greek classical *parōidia*.[1] In this chapter, I will identify and analyse some noteworthy popular elements attested in the fragments of classical epic parody, in an attempt to highlight the diffusion of significant popular elements (both thematic and linguistic) in this genre and to detect them in earlier poems and genres. My analysis will start from the poems of the genre of classical parody and will subsequently expand to include earlier sources and different contemporary genres. In the first section of this chapter, I will study the occurrence in epic parody of narrative motives attested in folk tales: the comparison of such narrative motifs with the *Index of Popular Motifs* drafted by Thompson (1955–8) will show that several elements attested in epic parodies show evident popular roots. In the second section, I will investigate the connection between classical *parōidia* and the 'grotesque body': in other words, I will stress the significant employment, in epic parody, of elements linked to the field of body (in its extended meaning) and in its most 'vulgar' traits; subsequently, I will analyse the connection of parody with scatology, food and sex. In the third section, I will examine the use of proverbial expressions to prove that the language of epic parodies was influenced by popular tones: proverbs constitute one of the most representative forms of popular wisdom and their insertion in epic parodies was plausibly due to the fact that parodists could exploit popular language in order to 'lower' the solemnity of the model and to enhance the comic content of their poems.

3.2 Epic parody and popular motifs

Despite the shortage of sources, evidence seems to show that classical *parōidia* was characterised by popular motifs that are easy to detect in worldwide folk traditions. This seems to be proved by the fragment of Hegemon, which disclose the only explicit example of the reuse of popular motifs in classical epic parody. As we have seen in the previous chapter, the Hegemon fragment is probably a parodic memory of the

[1] From a historical perspective, the persistence of popular elements in epic parody may depend also on the very origins of parody, which was, at its beginning, strictly related to popular performances (as indeed it was during all its history). Even if the poems we read today were composed by 'aristocratic' poets, it is not unlikely that the first parodies were performed by poets of humble social extraction, that some of the original characteristics of this genre had then become stereotypical and that they were, therefore, re-employed by subsequent poets: the lowly background of early parodists may explain the use of popular elements in epic parodies.

Odyssey: the narrator of the poem embodies a comic *alter ego* of Odysseus who goes back home after his bathetic deeds. In the fragment, the return of the narrator to his wife represents a playful reinterpretation of the traditional motif of the 'homecoming husband' — *i.e.* the man who returns home after a long absence just in time to prevent the remarriage of his wife — which lies at the basis of the plot of the *Odyssey* and is attested in other epic *nostoi*.[2] Hegemon enriches the popular motif already engrained in its model with the witty depiction of the conflictual relationship between the protagonist and his wife: in vv. 13–17, the narrator complains to her because she has not prepared an appropriate meal to celebrate his victorious poetical performance. The humour of the scene depends on the striking contrast between the narrator's wife and Homeric ones: unlike the narrator's wife, epic wives take great care of their husbands and, especially in the case of Penelope, are very concerned about their husbands' conditions. Moreover, the scene may recall also the popular conflictual relationship between husbands and wives, another common motif in folktales, attested in several variants all around the world.

Popular folk motifs are attested in earlier poems characterised by the comic reuse of epic models, namely the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* and the *Margites*. The Homeric Hymn, for instance, shows the topos of the precocious child who leaves his own crib, a motif which is common in several cultures all over the world: as we have seen, this popular motif was probably reinterpreted in the hymn as a comic allusion to the *res gestae* of epic heroes like Heracles. However, this structural motif may also have its roots in popular models, such as that of the mischievous kid who wanders around and makes his pranks against the will of his family and who is able to set himself free thanks to his smartness. Although we have no evidence of this motif in Greek culture, its diffusion in many folktales suggests that similar traditions may have characterised also some lost product of Greek popular culture.[3] The richest poem in popular motifs, however, is the *Margites*. From an overarching structural perspective, the narration of the *res gestae* of a blockhead is often connected with the portrayal of proverbially silly

[2] Cf. *e.g.* Hansen (1998) and Ready (2014). The popular background of epic has already been researched in several other studies: cf. *e.g.* Carpenter (1946), Glenn (1971), Page (1973), Frame (1978), Mondi (1983), Matsumoto (1997), Hansen (1997), Davies (2001; 2002).

[3] Several popular elements have been already found in the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*: cf. *e.g.* the commentary by Vergados (2013), who has nonetheless forgotten to mention the topos of the precocious child who leaves his own crib: Thompson (1955–8) has identified this motif with the code T585.

characters.[4] This seems to find support in the frequent attribution of some of the features of Margites to other proverbial simpletons such as Coroebus and Melitides: while some scholars have conjectured a mistake in the textual tradition that would have led to the mixing up of the characters, the characters themselves may have actually been perceived as interchangeable. Their lack of a well-defined nature may in fact be a result of their popular nature and of the wealth of stereotypical anecdotes which, in an oral context, might have been indistinctly associated with any of them: indeed, the shaping of the protagonist himself — Margites — may have been influenced by the same folk stories. The fragments of the *Margites* reveal further popular motifs that find numerous parallels in other cultures. One of these motifs consists, for example, in the act of counting the waves of the sea, which is reported by several sources on the poem: from a structural perspective, this action belongs to the sphere of paradoxical tasks.[5] Another popular motif is Margites' problematic relationship with sex. Several sources indeed report that he delayed sexual intercourse even after his wedding: this point, which will be more throroughly invesitigated later in this chapter, is common in several depictions of simpletons. Some sources report the conflictual relationship of Margites with his mother-in-law, another pervasive popular element attested all over the world.[6]

3.3 Epic parody and grotesque body

Bakhtin has stressed the close relationship between parody and grotesque realism, *i.e.* the degradation of all that is 'spiritual' and solemn through the reference to vulgar corporal aspects related to the body such as scatology, sex and food. This explains the persistence of corporality and of grotesque realism in parody: the continuous reference to 'low' themes and objects, as well as the constant use of trivial language triggers a fuller understanding of the world in its kaleidoscopic variety through the inclusion of

[4] For evidence on this point, cf. *e.g.* Schol. in Ar. *Ran.* 990b. Cf. *e.g.* the British 'Little Johnny'. Nonetheless, while this anthropological type in several traditions and works, is usually the carrier of undisclosed truths, Margites seems to remain nothing but a blockhead.
[5] This tradition is reported by late sources, since its first occurrence is attested in a work of Nicephoros Blemmydes (*Regia Statua* 155.8): cf. Hunger and Sevcenko (1986). Even so, it is likely that the Byzantine scholar drew this information on more ancient material which has been lost.
[6] Cf. *e.g.* Thompson (1955–8), J1744 and P262. Cf. already Knaack (1904, 315–16). Evidence on this problematic relation with his mother-in-law is attested for the first time in Hsch. μ 271.

elements that are commonly removed from the poetical discourse.[7] In classical epic parody we find a redundant use of these low elements: their 'vulgarity' contrasts with the epic model and/or counterbalances the solemnity of the epic language through the insertion of vulgar nuances.

3.3.1 Epic parody and scatology

Despite the scarcity of the sources, in classical epic parody we can see some interesting examples of aischrology, whose inherent 'low' standing is employed to foster the incongruence between the vulgar language and the solemn elements of the hypotext. Scatology is attested in the two first verses of the fragment of Hegemon, which are characterised by the contrast between the overall epic tone of the first verse and the aischrologic incipit of the second (σπέλεθος), followed by the expression πάντων ἀνδρῶν βδελυρώτατε, a vulgar, humorous reworking of the epic formula ἠὲ σὺ Πηλεΐδη πάντων ἐκπαγλότατ' ἀνδρῶν (*Il.* 1.146, 18.170, 20.389). Although at first sight the scatological reference might be interpreted only as a vulgar twist, it is possible that another popular element may be hidden in the fragment, thus reinforcing the connection between *parōidia* and popular culture. Even though a certain conclusion is impossible to reach, it cannot be excluded that, with the act of shit-throwing, Hegemon is alluding to a sort of parodic *phyllobolia* — the triumphal showering of a victor with leaves — or, even more convincingly, to the theatrical practice of stoning poorly appreciated poets and to the *pharmakos* ritual reported by Hipponax.[8]

The use of scatology, however, is not completely foreign even to the epic poems and has a very old tradition which dates back to the very origins of Greek literature. In

[7] Bakhtin (1984, 26).

[8] As for the first hypothesis, a parallel is *e.g.* Macho fr. 2 Gow. Besides the use of the verb βάλλω (cf. v. 1 of Hegemon) in the same sense and context, the passage deals with the criticism of a mediocre poet. Interestingly, we might have a *locus similis* in Petron. 90 *ex is here porticibus spatiabantur, lapides in Eumolpum recitantem miserunt*, within a section that closely recalls this fragment. In this passage, Eumolpus is stoned for his personal parodic reinterpretation of the *Troiae halosis*: cf. *e.g.* Habermehl (2006, 208). The stoning of Hegemon is attested in the passage of Chamaeleon that I have analysed in the first chapter: cf. *supra* p. 36. As for the second hypothesis, this scene recalls the *pharmakos* ritual frequently described by Hipponax (cf. *e.g.* frr. 6 and 46): cf. Degani (2007, 81, 104). Another fragment that presents many similarities with Hegemon's one is fr. 126 (cf. *infra* pp. 138–9). The similarity with the fragment of Hipponax is not only in the reference to stoning, but also the mention of the 'popular will' and the reference to food. The analogy between the two fragments, both very representative of Greek epic parody, might disclose a parodic topos.

the *Odyssey*, for instance, Polyphemus is portrayed when he vomits (*Od.* 9.373–4), while in the last part Hesiod's *Erga* we find passages about urinating, defecating and advice on sexual practice.[9] Still, for the sake of this work, the most interesting use of epic aischrology is attested in some episodes which are characterised by explicit parodic nuances. In an episode at the end of the *Iliad* (*Il.* 23.773–84), for instance, Ajax the Lesser — who is usually portrayed valiantly just like the other heroes — is depicted in anti-heroic, humorous terms.[10] During the games organised to honour the memory of Patroclus, Ajax contends with Odysseus and Antilochus for the footrace prize, but Athena, who favours Odysseus, causes him to stumble and to fall in the dung. The scatological element fosters the humour of the passage, which is based both on the caricatural depiction of the hero and on the parodic reworking of the typical epic scene. As for the first element, the humour arises from the contrast between the heroic standing of Ajax and the degradation brought about by his clumsy 'deed': Ajax, one of the most powerful heroes fighting under the walls of Troy, ignominiously falls in the dung and is mocked by the bystanders. As for the second element, the scene appear to mock the moment in which the intervention of a god/goddess favours one of the fighters, thus condemning the other to death.[11]

The *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* and the *Margites* display corporal elements too. In the hymn, the most illustrative of these elements occurs in vv. 293–8:

> ὣς ἄρ᾽ ἔφη, καὶ παῖδα λαβὼν φέρε Φοῖβος Ἀπόλλων.
> σὺν δ᾽ ἄρα φρασσάμενος τότε δὴ κρατὺς Ἀργειφόντης
> οἰωνὸν προέηκεν ἀειρόμενος μετὰ χερσίν,
> τλήμονα γαστρὸς ἔριθον, ἀτάσθαλον ἀγγελιώτην,
> ἐσσυμένως δὲ μετ᾽ αὐτὸν ἐπέπταρε· τοῖο δ᾽ Ἀπόλλων
> ἔκλυεν, ἐκ χειρῶν δὲ χαμαὶ βάλε κύδιμον Ἑρμῆν.

So Phoibos Apollo spoke, and picked the child up to carry him. But just

[9] These elements certainly have a popular background. Another (pseudo-)Hesiodic passage that deals with corporal subjects is the description of *Achlus* in *Scut.* 264–70. Cf. *e.g.* Bain (2007).

[10] The funeral games of Patroclus, recounted in book 23, showcase other playful scenes, such as, for instance, the dispute over Idomeneus' eyesight (vv. 473–98), Epeus who throws a lump of pig iron so poorly that the Achaeans laugh (vv. 839–40) and Agamemnon getting a prize without competing (vv. 884–97).

[11] The most famous of these scenes is in the duel between Hector and Patroclus. Patroclus is raging among the Trojans: Apollo strikes his back and causes his helmet to fall away from him (*Il.* 16.790–6). One cannot ignore the similarities between this passage and the episodes which involve Thersites and Irus: in all these episodes, the underdog is harshly beaten up and mocked by the bystanders (cf. *supra* pp. 88–90).

> then the powerful Argus-slayer made up his mind and, as he was borne aloft in Apollo's arms, he emitted an omen, a menial servant of the belly, an unruly messenger; and after it he promptly sneezed. On hearing that, Apollo dropped glorious Hermes on the ground.

Here, Apollo picks up his younger brother to take him to Zeus, but Hermes, in order to free himself from Apollo's grasp, farts in his arms, thus forcing his brother to drop him and set him free. The scatological note is exploited here with clear parodic purposes, since the depiction of farting is humorously described as the act of making prophecies.[12] In fr. 9 of the *Margites*, we find a similar scatological element, this time in a reference to urine:[13]

κ]ύστιν[, χ]ειρὶ δὲ μακρῆι
] τεύχεα, [κ]αί ῥα ἔλασσε
δυοῖσι δ'ἐν π]όνοι[σι]ν εἴχετο
]ν· ἐν δὲ [τ]ῆι ἀμίδι
]ἐξελεῖν δ' ἀμήχανον
κ]αί ῥ' ἐνώμειξεν ταχύ
]κ[αιν]ὴν ἐφράσσατο μῆτι[ν·
ἀνόρουσε] λιπὼν ἄπο δέμνια [θερμά
ὤειξε] θύρας, ἐκ δ' ἔδραμεν ἔξω
]ων διὰ νύκτα μέλα[ιναν
]ύσειε δὲ χεῖρα⟦ς⟧
δι]ὰ νύκτα μέλαιν[αν
]μεν οὐδὲ φανίο[ν
] δύστηνον κάρ[η
]εδόκεεν λίθ[
]ωι καὶ χειρὶ παχ[είηι
λέπτ' ἔ]θηκεν ὀστρα[κα

> . . . bl]adder, and with hand outstretched [he set his dick to] the pot, and thrust [it in. Then in two] pinches he was caught . . . while in the chamber pot . . . and it was impossible to get it out . . . and he very soon pissed into it . . . He thought of a new stratagem . . . [He jumped up,] leaving the [warm] bed . . . [opened] the doors and ran out . . . through the dark night . . . and . . . his hand . . . through the dark night . . . and no torch [he had] . . . unlucky he[ad] . . . thought it was a stone . . . and with his stout hand . . . [sma]shed the pot [on it . . .

[12] On the numerous comic elements of this passage, cf. *e.g.* Katz (1999). An additional element of humour emerges from the fact that Hermes' fart is described just as if his intestinal sounds were omens.
[13] The text of the fragment (which has been transmitted by a papyrus, *P. Oxy.* 2309) is still debated.

Despite its fragmentary nature, this poem appears to report an (otherwise unattested) episode that describes the nocturnal misadventure of an unspecified character with a chamber pot. The clumsy protagonist of the fragment is unable to take out his penis and is forced to wake up and go outside, where he smashes the chamber-pot on the head of a stranger that he had mistaken for a stone.[14]

Hipponax's poetry is studded with scatological references too. Fr. 95, for instance, describes the rude practice of two women to the detriment of a wretched character:[15]

ηὔδα δὲ λυδίζουσα· "βαϲκ$_{ι}$...κρολεα",
πυγιστί 'τὸν πυγεῶνα παρ[
καί μοι τὸν ὄρχιν τῆς φαλ[
κ]ράδη<ι> συνηλοίησεν ὥσπ[ερ φαρμακῶι
.].ποις διοζίοισιν ἐμπεδ[
καὶ δὴ δυοῖσιν ἐν πόνοιϲ[ι
ἥ τε κράδη με τοὐτέρωθ[εν
ἄνωθεν ἐμπίπτουσα, κ[
παραψιδάζων βολβίτωι [
ὦζεν δὲ λαύρη· κάνθαρο$_{ι}$ι δὲ ῥοιζέοντες
ἦλθον κατ' ὀδμὴν πλέον$_{ι}$ες ἢ πεντήκοντα·
τῶν οἱ μὲν ἐμπίπτοντε[ς
κατέβαλον, οἱ δὲ τοὺς οδ..[1
οἱ δ' ἐμπεσόντες τὰς θύρα[ς
τοῦ Πυγέλησι[.....]..[
..]ρυσσον οἱα[....]αροιμο[
..]ω δ' ἐϲ υμ̣ν[.....]....[
[ ]εν̣τ[.....]...[

She spoke in Lydian: "Faskati krolel,"
in Arsish, "your arse . . ."
and my balls . . .
she thrashed with a fig branch as though (I were a scapegoat)
. . . fastened securely by forked pieces of wood(?) . . .
and (I was caught?) between two torments . . .
On the one side the fig branch . . .
me, descending from above,
(and on the other side of my arse?) spattering with shit . . .
and my arse-hole stank. Dung beetles buzzing at the smell

[14] Cf. West (1974, 172; 2003, 225–6) and Gostoli (2007, 82). Lobel (1954) has plausibly suggested that the character of the fragment is Margites himself and that this misadventure takes place during his wedding night.
[15] Given the fragmentary condition of the papyrus, I report the fragment with the adscript *iota* to give a better understanding of the condition of the text.

came, more than fifty of them.
Some attacked
and struck down(?) . . . others, (whet their teeth?),
and others falling upon the doors . . .
of the Arsenal . . .
...
...
...

Despite its fragmentary state, the poem discloses epic reminiscences (both linguistic and thematic) that are used for the depiction of a scatological and sexual scene.[16] The popular background of the fragment may be demonstrated also by the context that has been hypothesised for the fragment: the comparison with a passage attested in Petronius (*Sat.* 138, 1–3) seems to suggest that the women depicted in the poem are performing some kind of 'fertility ceremony' in order to restore the protagonist's lost virility: if so, the poem reveals a folk background related to the magic sphere.[17]

3.3.2 Epic parody and food

The second important topos of popular culture is food and the relation humans have with it, which in classical *parōidia* is embodied by the persistent reference to hunger, parasites or gluttons. In his studies of parody, Bakhtin has stressed the relevant role played by food in parody: food and drinking are connected to the 'belly sphere', *i.e.* with that part of the body which is stereotypically related to irrational and basic desires.[18] The reference to food represents another way of mixing epic diction and vulgar themes.[19] In classical epic parody, the relation to food is often embodied by

[16] In the first verse, for instance, the epic form ηὔδα contrasts with the dialectal nature of the rest of the verse and with the trivial tone of the poem: for this verbal form, cf. *e.g. Il.* 1.92, *Od.* 1.31. In v. 2, the debated hapax πυγεῶνα may represent a nominal formation from πυγή ('buttocks'), just like πυλεών from πύλη ('gate'): Hipponax plays here on the epic word πύλη to create a dirty pun. If we push these hypotheses further, κράδηι in v. 3 may be a pun on the Homeric epic form κραδίη, used for the heart (cf. *e.g. Od.* 20.18). The fragment is interesting also because the description of the assault of the beetles recalls Homeric military descriptions, as proved *e.g.* by the verbs ἐμπίπτω and καταβάλλω. Other (scattered) Homeric forms are the verb συνηλοίησεν (from συναολάω), which is attested in Homer in the basic form ἀολάω (*Il.* 9.568), and the verb ῥοιζέω (cf. *Il.* 10.502).
[17] Cf. Degani (2007, 121–2).
[18] This is proved also by colloquial expressions attested in several languages: cf. *e.g.* 'a gut feeling'.
[19] The fragments of Philoxenus and Archestratus too are inherently characterised by the relationship between food and epic language. As I have already pointed out, however, in their poems parody

gluttons. In the fragment of Hegemon we find references to hunger and to food in v. 10, where the protagonist confesses that he has undertaken the trip to Athens in desperate need of food (οἷς καὶ ἐγὼ σιτοῖο μέγα χρηΐζων ἐπίθησα), and in vv. 14–17, in which the narrator enhances his self-representation as a hungry glutton by complaining with his wife because she has baked only a meagre cheesecake for him. That food was a common topic in the poems of Hegemon, however, is proved also by the surviving fragment of his comedy called *Philinna* (which seems to depict a character craving for food) and by the fact that Hegemon is enlisted among those who wrote descriptions of dinners (cf. *supra* pp. 35–6). Another interesting connection between Hegemon and food might be given by his nickname, Lentil-soup (cf. v. 20). Scholars have proposed several explanations for the name, but a conclusive theory has not yet been formulated.[20] It cannot be excluded, however, that the name derives from the content of one of his parodies, in which the poet described the food he was forced to eat because of his poverty.

Given the 'gastronomic' nature of his work, food plays a more significant role in the fragments of Matro. As I have pointed out in the second chapter of this work, the *Attic Dinner-Party* constantly plays on the re-contextualisation of epic scenes, characters and language which are re-employed for the description of the courses of the banquet. In addition, just as in the poem of Hegemon, the protagonists of the *Attic Dinner-party* are voracious gluttons.[21] The spasmodic hunger of the banqueters is pervasively stressed throughout the whole poem and characterises already the incipit of fr. 1. 1–3, in which the narrator begs the Muse to provide him with lavish dinners and acknowledges that great hunger accompanies him.[22] The narrator underlines his voraciousness in several other passages of the poem (cf. vv. 15, 32, 70–1, 93, 118) and, at the end of fr. 3 (v. 6), he goes so far as to qualify his belly with the honorific title *potnia* ('queen'), commonly employed to describe goddesses or important women. Gluttony is the chief 'quality' of the other diners too, *i.e.* Xenocles, Chaerephon and Stratocles. In vv. 7–8, Xenocles is described like Odysseus in the

obviously emerges, but just as a scattered humorous rhetorical trope, not as the constitutive purpose of the poem.

[20] Cf. *e.g.* Magnani (2014).

[21] In general, banquet scenes are attested in several episodes of the epic poems: epic parody, therefore, might have reinterpreted that specific typical scene.

[22] Cf. *supra* pp. 65–6.

Teichoscopia (*Il.* 3.196) and is said to stay on the threshold. This detail, curiously overlooked by scholars, is the key to understanding the reference to the parasitic gluttony of the character, as his position alludes to that of Odysseus dressed up as a beggar in the episode of the fight against Irus, the beggar of Ithaca. Irus repeatedly orders Odysseus to move away from the threshold, the place in which he used to stay to beg for food: through this sophisticated allusion, Matro at the same time hilariously recalls the epic hypotext and outlines the parasitic behaviour of Xenocles.[23] Chaerephon is explicitly portrayed as a hungry 'parasite' (fr. 1. 8–10): he eats like a lion and holds the leg of a lamb in his hand in order to take it home with him and have it for dinner (fr. 1. 100–1).[24] In vv. 30–2, the narrator mentions the insatiable gullet of Stratocles, playfully portrayed by means of the expression used for heroes κρατερὸν μήστωρα φόβοιο ('powerful raiser of fear', cf. *e.g. Il.* 6.97). The importance of gastronomic subjects in classical epic parody is proved also by frr. adesp. parod. 3–5 Br., all reported in different sections of Athenaeus's *Deipnosophistae*:

> τοῖς δ' ὁ κόλαξ πάμπρωτος ὑφαίνειν ἤρχετο μῶκον
>
> And for them the parasite first of all began to weave his mockery
>
> πλήρης μὲν λαχάνων ἀγορή, πλήρης δὲ καὶ ἄρτων
>
> The marketplace was full of vegetables, and full also of bread
>
> τέτλαθι δή πενίη καὶ ἀνάσχεο μωρολογούντων·
> ὄψων γὰρ πλῆθός σε δαμᾷ καὶ λιμὸς ἀτερπής
>
> Be of good courage, Poverty, and endure it when people talk nonsense;
> For a crowd of dishes and unpleasant hunger overwhelms you.

In these three fragments, food and hunger are the very protagonists. The first fragment has already been analysed in the first chapter, as it features a clear example of minimal

[23] Cf. *Od.* 18.10, 17, 33, 110, 128. Interestingly, another similarity is the fact that in this passage Irus and Odysseus fight for access to food, just like the banqueters in the poem of Matro.
[24] Chaerephon is compared to a sea-gull just like Hermes who flights over the sea on his way to Ogygia in *Od.* 5.51. In the Homeric passage, the sea-gull is looking for fish. Another comic element lies in the fact that the character is here portrayed like a lion not because of his fighting skills (as it is usual in epic, cf. *e.g. Il.* 20.164–75) but because of his restless hunger and voracity: cf. also Moulton (1977, 100).

parody.[25] Fr. 2 Br. is a description of a marketplace built on epic passages, *i.e. Il.* 2.226 (in which Thersites complains about Agamemnon) and *Od.* 20.355 (witihn Theoclimenus' prophecy against the Pretenders). Fr. inc. 3 Br. is a speech that a character (plausibly a parasite) addresses to the poverty he is forced to endure. The expression τέτλαθι δή πενίη καὶ ἀνάσχεο plays on the epic model attested in *Il.* 1.586 and 5.382 (in which Hephaestus consoles his mother Hera and Dione her daughter Aphrodites respectively) and in *Od.* 20.18 (in which Odysseus talks to his own heart and tells him to endure the abuse of his rivals).[26]

The relation between food and epic parody dates back to archaic literature, as demonstrated by several passages attested in the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*, in the *Margites* and in the poems of Hipponax. An entire section of the Homeric hymn (vv. 115–41), for instance, describes a sort of sacrifice performed by the newborn god. After having reached the Alpheios with the cattle stolen from his brother Apollo, Hermes slaughters two cows, roasts their meat and cuts it into twelve equal portions; he tries to eat the meat, but he realises that he is unable to do it; as a consequence, he burns everything and returns to his cave in Cyllene. Although the nature of this ritual is still very debated, the investigation of some of its elements clearly suggests a playful re-elaboration of the traditional Greek sacrifice in honour of the gods: this points to a caricatural reworking of epic based on its popular rituality.[27] Another interesting example is attested in our evidence on the *Margites*. A passage of the Byzantine historian Nicephoros Gregoras (*Or.* 3, 5 p. 423, 15-18) reports the gluttony of Margites, who is portrayed as a parasite:

> [Ἱστορία παρασίτου] καὶ ποιῶν παραπλήσιον τῷ λαιμάργῳ Μαργίτῃ, ᾧ παρασίτῳ γε ὄντι τέχνη τις ἦν τὰς τῶν πλουσίων περιϊόντι τραπέζας ἀμοιβαδὸν ἀποπτύειν ἐς τὰ τῶν ὄψων βελτίω μετά τινος ἤθους ἀστειότητι καὶ εὐτραπελίᾳ κεχρωσμένου, ἵνα τῶν ἑστιατόρων ὁμοῦ καὶ τῶν δαιτυμόνων βδελυττομένων αὐτὸς ἑστιῷτο μόνος, […]
>
> [History of a parasite] And doing similarly to the gluttonous Margites, who, being a parasite, had a particular ability to approach the eating-table of rich people and to spit alternately on the better dishes with a disposition

[25] Cf. *supra* p. 68.
[26] The 'poverty' addressed by the speaker is a personification: this would connect the fragment to other personifications of Poverty attested, for instance, in Hesiod and Aristophanes.
[27] The nature of this ritual has been discussed: cf. Vergados (2013, 324–9).

> tinged with prettiness and liveliness. He did that so that himself was the only one who feasted among the hosts and the loathing guests […]

Margites spits on the best dishes in order to ensure that he is the only one to eat them.[28] This evidence shows an interesting aspect of the character of Margites — who shows occasional smartness and was, or at least behaved as, a parasite — and demonstrates that also this inherently parodic poem included some descriptions of banquets. The hypotext of this episode might have been one of the several dining scene contained in the Homeric poems.[29] In the works by Hipponax, the most famous representations of gluttons is obviously fr. 126, a satirical depiction of a vulgar glutton assembled from epic expressions which are amusingly re-elaborated and inserted in a vulgar context:[30]

> Μοῦσά μοι Εὐρυμεδοντιάδεω τὴν ποντοχάρυβδιν,
> τὴν ἐγγαστριμάχαιραν, ὃς ἐσθίει οὐ κατὰ κόσμον,
> ἔννεφ᾽, ὅπως ψηφῖδι <κακῇ> κακὸν οἶτον ὄληται
> βουλῇ δημοσίῃ παρὰ θῖν᾽ ἁλὸς ἀτρυγέτοιο
>
> Tell me, Muse, of the sea swallowing,
> the stomach Carving of Eurymedontiades who eats in no orderly manner,
> so that through a baneful vote determined by the people he may die
> a wretched death along the shore of the undraining sea

Hipponax exploits Homeric diction to produce a satirical depiction of a vulgar glutton and plays with pure epic formulas and style. The incipit of the poem is a combination of the well-known incipit of the *Iliad* and that of the *Odyssey*, and recalls the invocations to the Muse(s) that used to open the rhapsodic performances through the

[28] That the character mentioned coincides with the protagonist of the pseudo-Homeric poem seems to be proved by other occurrences of this character in the work of Nicephoros. Interestingly, the only occurrence of the act of spitting in the Homeric poems recurs in Hom. *Il.* 23.781, in one of the comic passages of the *Iliad* (Ajax that slips on the dung, στῆ δὲ κέρας μετὰ χερσὶν ἔχων βοὸς ἀγραύλοιο | ὄνθον ἀποπτύων, μετὰ δ᾽ Ἀργείοισιν ἔειπεν·).

[29] Cf. *e.g.* Sherratt (2004). An abusive description of a parasite carried out through epic memories is portrayed also in an elegiac fragment of Asius of Samus (fr. 14) reported in Ath. 3.125b-d; the extremely difficult interpretation of the fragment, however, makes it hard to reach any conclusion: cf. *e.g.* Iannucci (2004).

[30] For a list of scholars who have investigated the parodic nature of the poem, cf. Faraone (2004, 211 n. 4). Given the presence of an invocation to the Muse, the fragment plausibly belongs to the opening part of a longer poem about an unidentified ‘descendant of Eurymedon’, whose debated identity may hide another epic allusion: cf. Koenen (1974).

use of ἐν(ν)έπω (v. 3), the canonical verb of poetic inspiration.[31] Homeric language is well attested also in the last two verses of the poem, as confirmed by the Homeric expressions οὐ κατὰ κόσμον (cf. *Od.* 20, 181 and *h.Merc.* 255), κακὸν οἶτον ὄληται (cf. *Il.* 3.417), παρὰ θῖν᾽ ἁλὸς ἀτρυγέτοιο (cf. *Il.* 1.316).[32] In addition, the use of compounds (ποντοχάρυβδις and ἐγγαστριμάχαιρα, which describe the compulsive gluttony of the protagonist) is a stylistic technique commonly used in epic language. The former word, ποντοχάρυβδις, recalls epic-like compounds with the same first element πόντος.[33] The latter, ἐγγαστριμάχαιραν, comically alludes to the Homeric expression ἔχων ἐν χειρὶ μάχαιραν (cf. *h.Ap.* 535).[34] Another example of the connection between food and parody in the poetry of Hipponax is given by fr. 7:

†τέαρε[. . . . .]δεύειε† τὴν ἐπὶ Σμύρνης
ἴθι διὰ Λυδῶν παρὰ τὸν Ἀττάλεω τύμβον
καὶ σῆμα Γύγεω καὶ †μεγάστρυ† στήλην
καὶ μνῆμα Τωτος, Μυτάλιδι πάλμυδος,
πρὸς ἥλιον δύνοντα γαστέρα τρέψας.

… go along the road to Smyrna
through Lydia past the tomb of Attalus
and the gravestone of Gyges and the column of …
and the memorial of Tos, sultan at Mytalis,
turning your belly towards the setting sun.

[31] Cf. *Il.* 1.1–2 Μῆνιν ἄειδε θεὰ Πηληϊάδεω Ἀχιλῆος | οὐλομένην, ἣ μυρί᾽ Ἀχαιοῖς ἄλγε᾽ ἔθηκε and *Od.* 1.1–2 Ἄνδρα μοι ἔννεπε, Μοῦσα, πολύτροπον, ὃς μάλα πολλὰ | πλάγχθη. For the verb ἐν(ν)έπω, cf. also Kleinknecht (1967, 113), Dettori (1994) and the *loci similes* listed by Degani (1991, 128). The first verse matches the Iliadic passage also for the use of the epic-sounding patronymic Εὐρυμεδοντιάδεω, which recalls the Πηληϊάδεω of the incipit of the *Iliad*.

[32] Cf. *e.g.* Guida (1994, 23–4). Hipponax plays also with concepts that do not belong to the Homeric world: the word ψηφίς, attested once in Homer (*Il.* 21.260) in relation with the pebbles of the Scamander river, takes on the additional semantic nuance of 'pebble for the vote'.

[33] As noticed by Degani (1991, 128), the word ποντοχάρυβδιν at the end of the verse recalls also *Od.* 12.113 (with the word Χάρυβδιν in the end of the verse), and further epic passages: cf. *e.g. Il.* 1.439, 2.771, 3.283 for the word ποντο[⏑-x] at the end of the verse. Cf. ποντοπόρος in *e.g. Il.* 1.469, *Od.* 12.69, *h.Ap*. 493. Moreover, the adjective ποντοχάρυβδις alludes to the Odyssean sea-monster Charybdis, antonomasia of whirlpool: cf. Degani (2007, 133) for a detailed analysis of the meaning of the word.

[34] As for some *loci similes* of the second term of the compound, 'Charybdis', and for the second word, ἐγγαστριμάχαιρα, cf. Degani's critical edition.The term plays also on the different connotations of the word μάχαιρα, employed both in military and culinary contexts ('sword' and 'knife'). The compound solemnly takes the whole hemistich and amusingly describes the protagonist's stomach that, compared to a blade, cuts and digests any food. While in the Homeric passage heroes brandish the sword in their hand, the protagonist here comically 'wields' it in his belly, so that he does not even need to chew the food before swallowing it.

The poem is an ironic invitation to an unidentified character (presumably a glutton) to undertake a sort of pilgrimage around Lydian sepulchres. In the final *iambos*, made up of epic vocabulary, the expression πρὸς ἥλιον δύνοντα γαστέρα τρέψας ('turn your belly toward the setting sun') is a humorous *aprosdoketon* based on the expression κεφαλὴν τρέπειν ('to turn the head') attested in *Od.* 13.29.[35]

3.3.3 Epic parody and sex

The last aspect of the grotesque body which I am going to analyse is that concerning sex. Among the extant texts belonging to classical epic parody, we do not find passages which employ epic language to narrate explicitly sexual scenes. This is probably due, on the one hand, to the extreme shortage of surviving verses of classical epic parody and, on the other hand, to the fact that this topic was unfitting for the content of the poem. Nevertheless, the proliferation of erotic scenes which are described through the use of the epic language in earlier and contemporary poems suggests that such sexual depictions are typical in epic parody too. The only clues are attested in Matro's poem. In fr. 1. 121–2, Matro reports the arrival to the banquet of two prostitutes:

> πόρναι δ' εἰσῆλθον, κοῦραι δύο θαυματοποιοί,
> ἃς Στρατοκλῆς ἤλαυνε ποδώκεας ὄρνιθας ὥς.
>
> Whores came in, two wonder-working girls,
> Whom Stratocles was driving like fast-legged birds.

What is interesting, here, is not the mere presence of the prostitutes at the banquet, since they were definitely a usual feature on such occasions.[36] What is interesting is that the prostitutes, in v. 122, are described by means of the same expression used in the *Iliad* to describe the best horses of the Achaian army (2.764). It has been correctly noticed that the comparison between horse-riding and sex appears frequently in Greek literature and it is probable that the author here is making a vulgar pun through the epic model. Likewise, fr. 6. 2 (which perhaps belongs to the section of the poem

[35] The whole verse is made of Homeric expressions: cf. ἥλιος+(κατά)δύω in *e.g. Il.* 1.601, *Od.* 3.138.
[36] Cf. Olson and Sens (1999, 142–4).

devoted to the depiction of the symposium) is a solemn four-words hexameter in which a woman is said to be uninterested in the distaff, a typical female tool:

> οὐδ᾽ ἀπὸ πασσαλόφιν κρέμασαν, ὅθι περ τετάνυστο
> σκινδαψὸς τετράχορδος ἀνηλακάτοιο γυναικός.
>
> But they did not hang it from the peg, where had been hung
> A four-stringed lyre belonging to a woman unconcerned with the distaff.

The expression is a refined way to describe a courtesan, who is not used to wool-making but rather to sexual activities. The parodic point, here, is the (curiously overlooked) allusion to Penelope and her shroud-weaving.

Apart from the Homeric passages already analysed in the previous chapter (the *Dios Apatē* and the episode of Hephaestus and Aphrodite), some blatant sexual scenes in archaic poetry are attested in the *Margites*: one of the most typical elements of the poem is the difficult relationship of its protagonist with sex.[37] Frr. 7a–c, for instance, report that Margites did not know whether it had been born to his mother or to his father: this proves not only his stupidity, but also his total ignorance about the human reproductive system. The Byzantine scholar Johannes Tzetzes reports this anecdote in his *Chiliades* (4.867–71 = fr. 7c):

> […] Ἄκουε τὸν Μαργίτην,
> εἰς ὃν ὁ γέρων Ὅμηρος ἡρωϊάμβους γράφει.
> Οὗτος ὢν γέρων νουνεχὴς αὐτόχρημα νοῦς, φρένες,
> ἐξανηρώτα τίς αὐτὸν ἐγκυμονήσας βρέφος
> ἐκ τῆς γαστρὸς ἐγέννησεν, ἆρ᾽ ὁ πατὴρ ἢ μήτηρ.
>
> […] Hear about Margites,
> for whom old Homer writes poems in hexameters and *iamboi*.
> Being old and surely sensible in his mind and senses,
> he asked, who, becoming pregnant of him,
> birthed [him] out of the stomach: "My father or my mother?"

Even more representative are frr. 8a–e, which directly concern the sexual (in)activity of Margites. These sources, albeit with different details, disclose that Margites did not

[37] A light-hearted erotic allusion is attested also in the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*, namely in the episode of the nocturnal love affair between Zeus and Maia.

know that he had to have sexual intercourse with his wife — or perhaps his fear of his mother-in-law inhibited him — and that his wife convinced him to sleep with her by tricking him, claiming that she had been wounded in the genitals and that the only way Margites could cure her was by sticking his own genitals into hers.[38] We find this description, for instance, in Eustathius' commentary on the *Odyssey* (p. 1669, 48–50 = fr. 8c):

> οὕτως ἔγνωμεν καὶ τὸν ἄφρονα Μαργίτην . . . ὃν ὁ ποιήσας τὸν ἐπιγραφόμενον Ὁμήρου Μαργίτην ὑποτίθεται εὐπόρων μὲν εἰς ὑπερβολὴν γονέων φῦναι, γήμαντα δὲ μὴ συμπεσεῖν τῇι νύμφηι ἕως ἀναπεισθεῖσα ἐκείνη <ὑπὸ τῆς μητρὸς> τετραυματίσθαι τὰ κάτω ἐσκήψατο, φάρμακόν τε μηδὲν ὠφελήσειν ἔφη πλὴν εἰ τὸ ἀνδρεῖον αἰδοῖον ἐκεῖ ἐφαρμοσθείη· καὶ οὕτω θεραπείας χάριν ἐκεῖνος ἐπλησίασεν.
>
> In the same way we have heard of the foolish Margites . . . whom the author of the *Margites* that bears Homer's name represents as having been born to exceedingly affluent parents, but when he married he did not fall upon his bride until she, at her mother's instigation, pretended to have suffered a wound in her lower parts, and said that no remedy would be of any help except for a male member being fitted to the place: so it was that he made love to her, for therapeutic purposes.[39]

The fulfillment of the erotic act seems to be attested in frr. 10 and 11, both very lacunose and transmitted by papyrological sources. It has been argued that the former belongs to the episode in which Margites' wife persuades him to sleep with her, while the latter may represent the erotic 'happy ending', *i.e* the description of the sexual intercourse of the couple.[40]

In iambic poetry, sexuality is a persistent subject and is frequently described through the reuse of epic language and motifs. This is very clear in the poetry of Archilochus, who in many of his poems applies the elevated epic language to sexual content. An example of this technique is attested in fr. 41, characterised by the

[38] The conflictual relationship between Margites and his wife is certainly funny if compared with the poetic one of Homeric married couples (cf. *e.g.* Hector and Andromache).
[39] Commentaries have curiously overlooked the fact that in the fragment the protagonist is described as the son of rich parents. Although speculative, this might suggest that Margites was actually some kind of prince or king just like the Homeric heroes.
[40] Cf. also a passage of Hippolytus' *Refutation of all Heresies*, that West (2008) has attributed to the *Margites* and that, in his view, would represent a reference to a vagina (perhaps that of Margites's wife).

expression πέτρης ἐπὶ προβλῆτος (‘on a protruding rock’) similarly attested in *Il.* 16.407:

> κηρύλος
> πέτρης ἐπὶ προβλῆτος ἀπτερύσσετο
>
> a kingfisher
> flapped its wings on a protruding rock

Ancient sources report that the portrayal of the halcyon flapping its wings on the sea rock was employed by Archilochus to describe a κορώνη (‘shearwater’) shaking for pleasure.[41] Some scholars have consequently proposed a sexual reading of the fragment: the image would represent the sexual act of a woman reaching her pleasure on top of her man.[42] Likewise, in fr. 44, it has been suggested that Archilochus employs the Homeric image of the sea foam (*Il.* 18.403) or of the froth (cf. *Il.* 20.168) to describe the act of *fellatio*:[43]

> πολλὸς δ’ ἀφρὸς ἦν περὶ στόμα
> and there was much foam round the mouth

The first ‘Cologne epode’ (frr. 196, 196a) displays a pervasive comic reinterpretation of Homeric formulas in an erotic context.[44] Although its content has been fiercely discussed, the poem seems to narrate an autobiographical episode in Archilochus’ life, in which the iambic poet had sexual intercourse with a recalcitrant *parthenos*. As some scholars have correctly underlined, the poem is almost totally made up of epic

[41] Scholars have offered several interpretations to the κορώνη, sometimes considering it a proper name (cf. *e.g.* Dover 1963, 185 n. 1), sometimes considering it a textual corruption of πόρνη (‘prostitute’) or κόρη (‘girl’). Cf. also Swift (2019, 264–5).
[42] For a non-erotic interpretation of the fragment, cf. Gallavotti (1975, 28–30).
[43] West (1993), *contra* Swift (2019, 268). Stoessl (1979, 157–9; *contra* Bossi 1984, 156–7) has argued that fr. 45 too describes a *fellatio* with the parodic reuse, in a sexual context, of the (already) Homeric verb κύπτω (‘to bend forward’), but the hypothesis is quite unconvincing. West (1974, 134–5) has argued that also fr. 190 displays an erotic *double entendre* played on Homeric language (καὶ βήσσας ὀρέων †δυσπαιπάλους, οἷος ἦν ἐφ’ ἥβης, ‘and rugged mountain glens, such was I in my youth’), as the ‘rugged mountain glens’, an expression that recalls a Homeric turn of phrase, would allude to the body of a woman.
[44] Almost all scholars today agree on the (extensively discussed) Archilochean authorship. Cf. Degani (1977; 2005, 7–22). For an up-to-date analysis of the epodes, cf. Nicolosi (2007), Swift (2015; 2019).

language and displays a massive re-employment of Homeric scenes.[45] From a general perspective, the whole scene alludes to the meeting of Odysseus and Nausicaa in book 6 of the *Odyssey*, but the poems discloses also several more specific epic allusions.[46] The description of the meeting with the girl (fr. 196a. 42–5), for instance, recalls the Iliadic scene commonly called *Dios Apatē* (cf. *supra* pp. 82–3), in which Hera cunningly persuades Zeus to sleep with her in order to distract him and let the Greeks regain advantage over the Trojans.[47] Likewise, the verbal crossfire of the two protagonists (fr. 196a. 4, 8, 13–15) recalls the episode of the 'embassy to Achilles' in book 9 of the *Iliad* (9.131–2, 144–5, 395–6), where Odysseus attempts to solve the quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon.[48] In addition, the protagonist of the poem refers to a matrimonial misadventure (fr. 196a. 34) that would equate his situation with that of Hephaestus (*Od.* 8.306–27) and expresses himself with the misogynistic tones (fr. 196a. 36–8) already used by Agamemnon in talking with Odysseus in *Od.* 11 (vv. 422, 424, 456).[49]

The reuse of epic language for sexual scenes is attested also in the poems of Hipponax. Fr. 23 alludes to the epic episode of the *Dolōneia*.[50] In the Iliadic episode, Odysseus and Diomedes, under the cover of darkness, sneak into the Trojan camp and Athena sends them a favourable omen: a heron flying on their right side (*Il.* 10.274–6).[51] By contrast, the poem by Hipponax narrates an episode that is anything but epic.

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[45] An extensive analysis of the linguistic Homeric background of the fragment has been recently made by Nicolosi (2007) and Swift (2019, 363–84).

[46] Cf. *e.g.* Nicolosi (2007, 275). It is not a coincidence that Archilochus drew his inspiration from a Homeric passage characterised by humorous overtones.

[47] Cf. *e.g.* Bossi (1973–4, 14), Van Sickle (1975, 126–9), Degani (1977, 16; 2005, 7–8).

[48] Cf. Bossi (1973–4, 16–17) and Degani (1977, 16–17).

[49] In vv. 22–3, scholars have spotted also a reminiscence of Hes. *Op.* 695–701 (cf. fr. 196a. 16–7, 33–4), where the poet recommends good sense when it comes to the wedding: cf. Degani (1977, 23). Likewise, fr. 108, in the light of the potential erotic tone of the fragment, might be a comic allusion to the tale of Ares and Aphrodite recounted in book 8 of the *Odyssey* (cf. pp. 83–5). Russello (1993, 199) has correctly suggested that the invocation of the speaker to Hephaestus in this context would sound comic given his 'clumsiness' in love affairs (κλῦθ' ἄναξ Ἥφαιστε, καί μοι σύμμαχος γουνουμένωι | ἵλαος γενέο, χαρίζεο δ' οἷά περ χαρίζεαι, 'Love Hephaestus, give ear to my entreaty, be my propitious ally | and grant the kind of favour that you grant'): cf. *supra* p. 86 n. 118.

[50] The status of the *Dolōneia* is problematic, and the vast majority of scholars consider it as a spurious later insertion in the *Iliad*: cf. *e.g.* Danek (1988), Reichel (1994) and West (2011, 233–5). Since epic parody took as a model epic in general (and not only Homer), the authorship of this passage is ultimately negligible for the general purpose of my thesis.

[51] Cf. Sousa Medeiros (1961) and Pòrtulas (1985). Cf. also fr. dub. 192 and Degani (1991, 41) for further *loci similes*. Another allusion to the *Dolōneia* in Hipponax seems to occur in fr. 72 and in a parodic fragment of Epicharmus (cf. *supra* pp. 91–2).

In the fragment, the speaker sneaks into the house of a girl called Arete at night for sexual purposes: an originally military epic scene is thus preposterously reused in a sexual context.[52]

ἐγὼ δὲ δεξιῷ παρ᾽ Ἀρήτην
κνεφαῖος ἐλθὼν ῥῳδιῷ κατηυλίσθην

with a heron on the right, I went to Arete
in the dark and took up lodging

Likewise, the poems of Anacreon disclose a playful reuse of epic language and scenes.[53] As I said, the epic parody of Anacreon seems to have been less explicit than that of Hipponax and Archilochus, and mostly based on the resetting of epic scenes into lighter (mainly erotic) contexts. The same reuse of epic reminiscences to describe erotic contents is attested in *PMG* 358, one of the most famous and celebrated poems of the poet. The poem is studded with Homeric reminiscences and vocabulary:[54]

σφαίρῃ δηῦτέ με πορφυρῇ
βάλλων χρυσοκόμης Ἔρως
νήνι ποικιλοσαμβάλῳ
συμπαίζειν προκαλεῖται·
ἡ δ᾽, ἐστὶν γὰρ ἀπ᾽ εὐκτίτου
Λέσβου, τὴν μὲν ἐμὴν κόμην,
λευκὴ γάρ, καταμέμφεται,
πρὸς δ᾽ ἄλλην τινὰ χάσκει.

Once again golden-haired Love strikes me with his purple ball and summons me to play with the girl in the fancy sandals; but she — she comes from Lesbos with its fine cities — finds fault with my hair because it is white, and gapes after another — girl.

[52] The verb καταυλίζομαι means ‘to be under the shelter of a house, of a tent’ or ‘take up a tent’ in a military context, but the verb here might have a sexual connotation. For a similar reuse of military vocabulary in an erotic context, cf. also the use of the military verb σκυλεύειν in fr. 69 (cf. *e.g.* [Hes.] *Sc.* 468 and Ar. *Lys.* 461). The scene is a topos from Homer onwards, as attested in the tale of Ares and Aphrodite and at the beginning of the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*, where Zeus visits Maia when Hera is sleeping.

[53] The lighthearted nature of the poems of Anacreon has been frequently pointed out by scholarship and is also proved by ancient primary sources (cf. *e.g.* Hor. *Carm.* 4.9.9–10).

[54] For a bibliography on this fragment cf. *e.g.* Marcovich (1983, 372 n. 1) Burzacchini (2001–2), Rosenmeyer (2004). A commentary on the fragment *e.g.* in Hutchinson (2001, 273–8).

In the fragment, the speaker is struck by love — embodied by the purple ball of Eros — for a girl from Lesbos, but sadly admits that she is indifferent to him because of his old age and that her erotic interest lies in another (presumably younger) lover.[55] The most explicit Homeric allusion here is the reference to the ball game, which recalls the scene of the meeting between Odysseus and Nausicaa (6.110–16), who is playing a ball game with her maids.[56] As pointed out by scholars, the similarities between the two passages lie not only in the reference to the σφαίρη, but also in the fact that the gods (Athena in the *Odyssey*, Eros in the fragment) equally exploit this object to make the old man and the girl encounter, and in the similar age gap between the protagonists.[57] The epic memory, here, loses its innocence: it is today widely recognised that in this passage the girl from Lesbos, unlike Nausicaa, is intent in the sexual act of a *fellatio*. The fragment is rich in Homeric reminiscences also from the linguistic point of view.[58] The first of such reminiscences lies in the expression ἐστὶν γὰρ ἀπ' εὐκτίτου | Λέσβου (vv. 4–5), an adaptation of two Homeric expressions: ἐΰκτιτον Αἰπὺ (*Il.* 2.592) and Λέσβον ἐϋκτιμένην (*Il.* 9.129). The latter, in particular, is exceptionally valuable in light of its general context because it is attested in the Iliadic passage in which Odysseus describes to Achilles the reparative gifts offered by Agamemnon.[59] The reference to the women of Lesbos, famous for their sexual skills, was surely understood by the audience.[60] Moreover, while the verb χάσκω (v. 8) is

[55] For an overview of the discussion on the identity of this lover, of the hermeneutical interpretations and of the setting of this poem (either a symposium, a *pannychis* or others), cf. *e.g.* Buzacchini (2001–2). It seems to me that an interesting (but overlooked) epic reference lies also in the word βάλλω + dative, which in Homer is most commonly used in military contexts (and is attested also in the fragment of Hegemon). Given that the depiction of Eros with the arrows probably dates back to Anacreon (cf. Pace 1994), it seems to me that here the poet is already playing with this topos, turning the weapons of the gods into a different object.

[56] This has been widely recognised: cf. *e.g.* Gentili (1958), Davidson (1987) Burzacchini (2001–2).

[57] Cf. *e.g.* Pace (1996, 84).

[58] Cf. *e.g.* Pace (1996), *contra* Marcovich (1983, 381–2). Another epic reference to the ball is attested in *Od.* 8.372, on occasion of the shows set up by Alcinous in honour of Odysseus at the Phaeacians's court: cf *e.g.* Davidson (1987). In the *Odyssey*, the ball is also defined as 'purpureus'. Another ironic hint is given by the reference to εὐκτίτου Λέσβου: cf. *e.g.* Harvey (1957, 213), Davison (1968, 247–55) and Woodbury (1979, 282).

[59] Vv. 128–30 δώσω δ' ἑπτὰ γυναῖκας ἀμύμονα ἔργα ἰδυίας | Λεσβίδας, ἃς ὅτε Λέσβον ἐϋκτιμένην ἕλεν αὐτὸς | ἐξελόμην, αἳ κάλλει ἐνίκων φῦλα γυναικῶν. Interestingly, the same Homeric passage is parodically reformuled in Pherecr. fr. 159 (cf. *supra* pp. 105–6): the recurrence of some specific episodes in humorous contexts is another proof of the fact that some scenes were more likely to be the object to comic reinterpretation than others because of their popularity (or, as in this case, their naughty content).

[60] Cf. Davidson (1987, 132).

attested in Homer in tragic contexts (cf. *e.g. Il.* 16.350 and *Od.* 12.350, where the word is referred to men that are respectively dying or drowning in a battle context), here it maliciously describes a sexual encounter.[61]

3.4 Epic parody and popular language

The popular side of epic parody can be detected also in some paroemial forms, whose low standing contrasts with the sophisticated context in which they are placed. As I have explained, proverbs typically embody popular wisdom and their insertion in epic parodies was exploited to enhance the humorous content of the poems. Popular 'linguistic' clues seem to be attested in the poems of Hegemon and Matro. In vv. 3–4 of the fragment of Hegemon ("ὦ πάντων ἀνδρῶν βδελυρώτατε, τίς σ' ἀνέπεισε | καλὴν <ἐς> κρηπῖδα ποσὶν τοιοῖσδ' ἀναβῆναι;"), for instance, the reference to the feet is plausibly shaped on proverbial expressions such as *CPG* Zen. I 95 (= App. I 30):

> Ἀνίπτοις ποσὶν ἀναβαίνων ἐπὶ τὸ στέγος. ἐπὶ τῶν ἀμαθῶς ἐπί τινα ἔργα καὶ πράξεις ἀφικομένων
>
> To go up to the roof with unwashed feet: [this proverb] is addressed to those who come to deal with things and actions ignorantly'.

The proverb perfectly fits the situation of the narrator, who is harshly criticised for his lack of poetic talent.[62] Another instance of the influence of proverbs on Hegemon's poetry is detectable in *CPG* I 406, 8 (cf. *supra* p. 38), which reports that Hegemon, when he could not come up with the words, employed in his parodies the expression καὶ τὸ πέρδικος σκέλος ('and the leg of Perdix'). The expression — which may have

[61] A similar reuse of elevated language in an erotic context occurs in *PMG* 417, in which Anacreon employs the metaphor (very common in Greece) of a young filly to refer to a courtesan who rejects sex with him. In v. 3, the word νηλέως has the same meaning it has in *Il.* 9.496–7, where it means 'stubborn', 'obdurate': however, while in the epic passage the word describes the ruthless spirit of Achilles, in this fragment it describes the recalcitrant behaviour of the courtesan. In addition, Harvey (1957, 211–13) has also underlined the epic syntax of the expression δοκεῖς δέ | μ' οὐδὲν εἰδέναι σοφόν instead of δοκεῖς μ'οὐκ εἶναι σοφόν (which is what we would expect according to contemporary idiom) and the mock-heroic tone conveyed by the pompous chariot-metaphor ἀμφὶ τέρματα δρόμου. For a commentary on the fragment, cf. *e.g.* Hutchinson (2001, 278–85) and Rosenmeyer (2004).

[62] The proverb finds its first literary reuse in Lucian (*Demon*. 4, 2, *Rh. Pr.* 14, 10, *Pseudol.* 4, 14).

been coined by Hegemon himself — suggests the proverbs could be inserted in the poems of epic parody.[63] In Matro we find a proverb in fr. 1. 35:

ἡ μόνη ἰχθῦς ἐοῦσα τὸ λευκὸν καὶ μέλαν οἶδε

[the cuttlefish] the only fish who knows white from black

It has been pointed out that Matro, in his personification of the cuttlefish, reformulates the Greek proverb οἶδε τὸ λευκὸν ἢ τὸ μέλαν ('one knows the black and white'), which was used to refer to someone who is only able to make basic intellectual distinctions. The humour is based on the attribution of such a human quality to a fish — a stereotyically stupid, irrational animal — as well as on the physical description of the cuttlefish, whose flesh is white and contrasts with the colour of its ink.[64] Likewise, in v. 52 (πέρκη τ' ἀνθεσίχρως καὶ ὁ δημοτικὸς μελάνουρος, 'and the sea-perch with her brightly coloured flesh, and the popular saddled bream') Matro reverses the proverb ἕπεται πέρκη μαλανούρῳ (literally 'a perch follows a saddled bream', which must mean 'keeping bad company') by placing the sea-perch before the saddled bream in the list of the courses.

Proverbs are attested also in the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* and in the *Margites*. In v. 36 of the hymn, for instance, Hermes decides to carry to his cave the tortoise that he has just encountered on his way and pronounces a hexameter of probable proverbial origins:

οἴκοι βέλτερον εἶναι, ἐπεὶ βλαβερὸν τὸ θύρηφιν.

better to be in the house: it's dangerous outside.

Interestingly, the same expression occurs in Hes. *Op*. 365, in a passage where the poet suggests keeping one's goods at home and not outside; for this reason, some scholars have convincingly hypothesised a comic allusion to the Hesiodic passage. Although the passage might represent only a neutral allusion to the original Hesiodic context,

[63] The proverb occurs also in Ath. I 4d, pronounced by the otherwise unknown poet Πάμφιλος ὁ Σικελός (cf. *SH* 597). As argued by Degani (1974, 103), the verses testify that Hegemon's adage had become quite popular.
[64] Cf. Olson and Sens (1999, 97).

the hymn seems to reinterpret the proverb through the striking contrast between the original wisdom of the utterance and its twisted use by the god entering Hermes' cave is no βέλτερον ('better') at all for the tortoise, since the god will kill the animal there.[65] In the *Margites*, we find the use of proverbial language in fr. 5:

> πόλλ' οἶδ' ἀλώπηξ, ἀλλ' ἐχῖνος ἓν μέγα
> The fox knows many tricks, but the hedgehog knows one big one

The verse is a proverb that some sources attribute to Archilochus (fr. 201). Although the interpretation of the verse itself is still controversial, the fragment seems to suggest the use of proverbial language in the poem.[66]

3.5 Conclusions

In this chapter, I have underlined the connection between epic parody and popular culture, pointing out the most valuable popular elements (both thematic and linguistic) attested in the fragments of classical epic parody and in earlier sources. My analysis has started from the poems of the genre of classical parody and has subsequently expanded its scope to include earlier sources in order to stress the points of contacts between them. In the first part, I have tackled the reuse of narrative motives which are attested in folk tales. In the second part, I have highlighted the significant employment of elements connected with the field of the grotesque body (scatology, food and sex). In the third section, I have explored the occurrence of proverbial expressions, pointing out that their inherent low standing contrasted with the solemnity of the epic model.

[65] In addition, in Greek culture the tortoise was usually considered as always being at home because of its carapace: the misuse of the proverb, then, might have sounded witty for the intrinsic paradox of Hermes' suggestion. For the proverbial nature of the hexameter, cf. Tzifopoulos (2000, 152–3). Another proverbial expression occurs in vv. 92–3, where Hermes intimates the old Boeotian winemaker to keep silent about his theft by means of a proverbial formula: cf. *e.g.* Vergados (2011, 304–7).
[66] Cf. *e.g.* Bettarini (2010), who provides also ample bibliography on this fragment.

Chapter 4
Playing with Metres: Parody, Hexameters, and *Iamboi*

4.1 Introduction

In Greek poetry, metre played a pivotal role in the identification and categorisation of poems. Together with other distinctive parameters (such as dialect, thematic content, stylistic features, performative settings), metre was undoubtably a 'salient feature' for the classification of literary genres throughout Greek history. The case of epic poetry is extremely representative in this respect: the relationship between the genre of epic and its metre, the hexameter, was very strict and historically stable.[1] The close connection between epic poetry and its metre explains why classical epic parodies were all composed in hexameters. On the one hand, this obviously reflects the origins of parodic practice. As I have pointed out earlier in this work, epic parody probably originated in the context of rhapsodic performances: for this reason, their metre was unsurprisingly the same of epic, namely the hexameter.[2] On the other hand, the use of the stereotypical 'epic' metre for the description of vulgar subjects was instrumental to create that perception of incongruence that was at the basis of the parodic mechanism. In other terms, within a poetic system in which the choice of metre was so essential to the definition of genre as the Greek one, the employment of the hexameter in the context of epic parodies represented a distinctive trait in itself. However, even if epic parody was predominantly composed in hexameters, the sources also occasionally display a curious mixing of hexametric and iambic metres. Just like the hexameter, the *iambos* was far from a 'neutral' metre; in fact, it characterises iambic poetry, whose salient feature is the presence of vulgar themes and language. This unusual combination of hexameters and iambs is attested in many important authors of epic parody and it seems to prove that this technique was frequently exploited. In order to pursue their comic goals, parodists could take advantage of the

[1] During the entire history of Greek literature, the identification between epic and the hexameter was so strong that the word *hexametra* ('hexameters') was used metonymically to refer to epic poetry.
[2] This is proved also by the fact that some rhapsodes were also parodists (and vice versa). This is not difficult to explain: the poetical material that they had to deal with was identical.

distinctive metrical aspects of epic: aware of the strict relationship between *epos* and hexameters, they played on this relationship by mixing the hexameter with the metre which 'embodied' the anti-solemn spirit *par excellence*, the *iambos*. The union of the most solemn metre (the hexameter) with the least elevated one (the iambic trimeter), can be considered the 'translation', in metrical terms, of epic parody itself, which is based on the mixture of 'high' (the epic hypotext) and 'low' (the parodic hypertext) elements. The purpose of this chapter is to underline this interesting aspect of epic parody, namely its ability to play with the formal metrical sterotypical features of epic. In the first section, I will analyse some poems that show a comic reworking of epic models in hexameters and demonstrate how the metrical structure of classical epic parody began to consolidate in earlier parodic practice. In the second, I will consider the poems characterised by the anomalous metrical mixture of *iamboi* and hexameters.

4.2 Overturning the metre of epic: earlier hexametric parodies

As I have previously underlined in the first chapter of this thesis, the hexametric metre was, to all intents and purposes, a salient, intrinsic feature of the genre of *parōidia*. This is proved by the fact that its extant corpus is written in hexameters and by the statements of two indirect sources. The first of these sources is a passage by Aristoxenus (fr. 136. 2 Wehrli *ap.* Ath. 14.638b) that describes the 'origins' of parody:[3]

> Ἀριστόξενος δέ φησιν: ὥσπερ τῶν ἑξαμέτρων τινὲς ἐπὶ τὸ γελοῖον παρῳδὰς εὗρον, οὕτως καὶ τῆς κιθαρῳδίας πρῶτος Οἰνώπας. ὃν ἐζήλωσαν Πολύευκτός τε ὁ Ἀχαιὸς καὶ Διοκλῆς ὁ Κυναιθεύς.
>
> Aristoxenus says: In the same way that some people made up parodies of hexameter lines in order to be amusing, so too Oenopas invented parodies of citharodic performances; Polyeuctus of Achaea and Diocles of Cynaetha followed his example. [transl. Olson 2011]

From this passage we can draw two conclusions. On the one hand, Aristoxenus confirms a notion which I have underlined in the first chapter, namely that παρῳδίαι

[3] See also my discussion of this passage *supra* at pp. 52–3, where I have highlighted its importance as an indirect testimony on the innate comic side of epic parody.

were written ἐπὶ τὸ γελοῖον, 'in order to be amusing', *i.e.* they were inherently comic. On the other hand, with the expression τῶν ἑξαμέτρων παρῳδὰς ('parodies of hexameter lines'), he explains that these parodies were built on hexametric models — that is to say epic poems — and this in turn suggests that they were also made up of hexameters.[4] The second source is less explicit but equally probative. In a passage by Polemon (already extensively analysed *supra* at pp. 25–8) the periegetes regards Hipponax as the inventor of the genre of epic parody in Greece. To do this, Polemon quotes Hippon. fr. 126, the only decently preserved fragment of the poet's works in hexameters.[5] The fact that Polemon identified this poem to elect Hipponax as the *prōtos euretēs* of the parodic genre, however, cannot be based *only* on his reuse of epic diction: as I have showed in the previous chapters, Hipponax intensively employed epic models in his poems. In fact, the choice of Polemon must have been based on the metrical structure of the poem. Fr. 126 is not the only extant hexametric poem by Hipponax with a comic content. In fr. 127, whose metrical structure suggests it was part of a composition in hexameters, the proper name Κυψώ is presumably a vulgar, comic distortion of the name Κ(αλ)υψώ ('Calypso'), the famous nymph who housed Odysseus: the name Κυψώ is etymologically connected with the verb κύπτω ('to bend forward'), which is frequently uses with a sexual connotation:[6]

> πῶς παρὰ Κυψοῦν ἦλθε
> how he came to Cypso

Despite the extremely fragmentary condition of the poem, we find here not only a comic reformulation of *epos* in dactylic metre, but also a parodic, specific reference to a character of the *Odyssey*.[7]

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[4] Given the reference to the practice of *kitharodia*, it seems probable that the word *hexametron* here identifies the hexametric genre *par excellence* (namely epic) and not simply the metre.
[5] Cf. *supra* pp. 134–5.
[6] Cf. Degani (2007, 133). The fragment consists in an incomplete verse, but the metrical analysis points to its hexametric nature. Another poem that probably belongs to this group is fr. 128, another hexametric poem: its analysis is hindered by its fragmentary nature, but the mixture of epic forms (cf. the Homeric verb ἀπιτάλλω, attested *e.g.* in *Il.* 5.271, *Od.* 11.250) with vulgar words (cf. σκιράφοις) seems to support this hypothesis. For the pun on Cypso, cf. also fr. 77.
[7] As I have shown in the introduction of this work (cf. *supra* pp. 13–16), the *Odyssey* is the prevalent model of epic parodies. Frr. 74–7, for instance, plausibly belonged to a poem on the adventures of Odysseus: the parodic nature of these fragments is not entirely demonstrable, but some clues such as

The light-hearted reuse of epic clichés in hexametric compositions is attested also in Xenophanes' fr. 22, part of a work which Athenaeus (*Epit.* 2.54e) significantly calls *Parōidiai*.[8] In this fragment, the language and some epic commonplaces are playfully reinterpreted in the context of a symposium.[9]

> πὰρ πυρὶ χρὴ τοιαῦτα λέγειν χειμῶνος ἐν ὥρῃ
> ἐν κλίνῃ μαλακῇ κατακείμενον, ἔμπλεον ὄντα,
> πίνοντα γλυκὺν οἶνον, ὑποτρώγοντ' ἐρεβίνθους·
> 'τίς πόθεν εἶς ἀνδρῶν, πόσα τοι ἔτε' ἐστί, φέριστε;
> πηλίκος ἦσθ', ὅθ' ὁ Μῆδος ἀφίκετο;'
>
> One should hold such converse by the fire-side in the winter season, lying on a soft couch, well-fed, drinking sweet wine, nibbling peas: 'Who are you among men, and where from? How old are you, my good friend? What age were you when the Mede came?'

The expression πὰρ πυρί, for instance, is a hapax attested in *Od.* 7.154, a passage in which Odysseus talks with Arete, the queen of the Phaeacians.[10] The incipit of v. 2, ἐν κλίνῃ μαλακῇ κατακείμενον, is a reworking of *Od.* 22.196 (εὐνῇ ἔνι μαλακῇ καταλέγμενος, cf. also *Il.* 22.504), an expression pronounced by Eumaeus, Odysseus' swineherd, to describe sarcastically the atrocious bonds used to punish the traitor Melanthius.[11] Xenophanes applies the epic expression antiphrastically to describe the

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the reuse of the Homeric model in a iambic context and several textual allusions seem to point in this direction. Likewise, fr. 194 (one of the so-called 'Strasbourg Epodes') is presumably a reinterpretation of the epic episode of the shipwreck of Odysseus on the coast of the island of the Phaeacians. The poem makes a large use of Homeric vocabulary and it has an interesting metrical structure (cf. *infra* pp. 167–8). For the analysis of these passages and further relations (not necessarily parodic) between Homer and Hipponax, cf. *e.g.* Rosen (1990, 22–5), Degani (1991; 2007), Nicolosi (2007), Hawkins (2016) and Prodi (2017).

[8] The name of these poems, *Parōidiai*, is not entirely reliable, as we cannot be sure that this was the name given to his compositions by the poet himself or even the title with which they initially circulated. The epic model of the poem is evident from its very first lines, which consist of a pastiche of Homeric formulas: cf. *e.g.* Untersteiner (1956, 136) and Tonelli (2010, 68 n. 49). For a study of the influence of Homeric language on the poems of Xenophanes, cf. Torres Guerra (1999).

[9] Some scholars have argued that the *Parōidiai* mentioned by Athenaeus might coincide with another of Xenophanes' scathing works, the *Silloi*: cf. *e.g.* Untersteiner (1956, CCXXXIX–LI, nn. 16 and 24) for discussion and bibliography. The testimonia and the fragments of Xenophanes follow the edition of Untersteiner (1956). Translations are taken from Lesher (1992)

[10] A very similar expression, always in relation to Odysseus, is attested also in *Od.* 17.572 (παραὶ πυρί).

[11] Interestingly, Xenophanes' Homeric references are quite 'original': they are mostly hapax or, in any case, expressions seldomly attested in the poems. Besides attesting to his deep knowledge of epic diction and demonstrating his skills in finding refined allusions, these poems confirm the widespread knowledge of the Homeric poem in Greek society: indeed, for the jokes to work, we must assume that at least part of audience must have been able to recognise the references.

soft couches of a symposium and substitutes the common epic word for 'couch', εὐνή, with κλίνη, commonly used to refer to the couches of a symposium and unattested in Homer. The last couplet is a playful allusion to the Homeric topos of 'asking for genealogies'. The beginning of v. 4, in particular, is the same of *Od.* 1.170 and closely recalls *Il.* 6.123 (τίς δὲ σύ ἐσσι φέριστε), in the context of the meeting between Diomedes and Glaucus. The humour, here, not only plays on the decontextualisation of epic forms which are placed in an incongruous context, but also in the mixture of such forms with 'lower' ones, as in the second part of v. 3 (ὑποτρώγοντ' ἐρεβίνθους) and in the addition of the colloquial form πηλίκος in v. 5.

The employment of hexameters for hilarious reinterpretations of epic models is attested also in the classical period. Several fragments of the Old and Middle Comedy display dactylic verses that are employed for a wide range of purposes, including the comic re-elaboration of the Homeric model.[12] This aspect is interesting as it proves that the tradition of playing with the epic metre continues to run parallel to the development of epic parody, since, in some classical plays, we find several hexametric humorous reinterpretations of Homer. Furthermore, it highlights the close relationship between parody and comedy in the fifth century BC: comic poets, just like the iambic ones which I have just examined, were perfectly able to compose 'hexametric' epic parody and even to write independent parodies alongside their comedies; in other terms, comedians could be parodists and *vice versa*. The best-known example of the use of hexameters for parodic purposes in a comedy is fr. 63 of Hermippus: twenty-three hexameters which belonged to the comedy called *The Porters*.[13] The fragment is

[12] For the use of hexameters in the comedies of Aristophanes and in Greek comedy in general, cf. *e.g.* Unger (1911), White (1912, 149–54), Dale (1968, 25–46), Pellegrino (2000, 238 n.1), Kloss (2001). A detailed analysis of the hexameters attested in fifth-century comedy has been made also by Pretagostini (1996). Some of the passages listed are not connected with epic parody, but only with the hexametric pattern: this is the case of the many oracular verses that mock the oracular style. Even if oracles in comedy are frequently characterised by comic tones because they are parodies of actual oracles, they should not be reckoned within the scope of epic parody because epic is not the target nor the instrument of the parodic mechanism. What is interesting in these hexameters, filled with epic language, is that, as Quaglia has argued, 'la composizione di esametri arcaicizzanti o solenni comportava *in ogni caso* il ricorso a materiale omerico'. Not all the oracles, however, were characterised by Homeric language: Pl.Com. fr. 3 (from the play *Adonis*), for instance, shows a dactylic metre but the language does not seem to be epic. The content of the only eight (perhaps nine) extant fragments in hexameters from the Middle Comedy seems to have oracular, not Homeric origins: cf. Pretagostini (1987) and Mastellari (2019, 107).

[13] This is the longest hexametric section delivered by a single character in a comedy. This 'exception' has led some scholars to break up the section and divide the hexameters between two different speakers:

a catalogue of various goods imported to Athens by sea from all Greece written in the Homeric-style and therefore characterised by thematic and linguistic epic hints.[14] From the thematic perspective, the fragment is a comic allusion to the *Catalogue of Ships* in the book 2 of the *Iliad*. Hermippus, here, plays not only on the baseness of the actual objects — in Homer an epic *Schiffskatalog*, here vulgar imported goods — but also on the list itself, a structural element which is typical of epic poems. This proves, once again, that those who performed epic parodies exploited characteristically epic framing devices:[15]

ἔσπετε νῦν μοι Μοῦσαι Ὀλύμπια δώματ᾽ ἔχουσαι,
ἐξ οὗ ναυκληρεῖ Διόνυσος ἐπ᾽ οἴνοπα πόντον,
ὅσσ᾽ ἀγάθ᾽ ἀνθρώποις δεῦρ᾽ ἤγαγε νηὶ μελαίνῃ.
ἐκ μὲν Κυρήνης καυλὸν καὶ δέρμα βόειον,
ἐκ δ᾽ Ἑλλησπόντου σκόμβρους καὶ πάντα ταρίχη·
ἐκ δ᾽ αὖ Ἰταλίας χόνδρον καὶ πλευρὰ βόεια·
καὶ παρὰ Σιτάλκου φώραν Λακεδαιμονίοισι
καὶ παρὰ Περδίκκου ψεύδη ναυσὶν πάνυ πολλαῖς.
αἱ δὲ Συράκουσαι σῦς καὶ τυρὸν παρέχουσι.
καὶ Κερκυραίους ὁ Ποσειδῶν ἐξολέσειεν
ναυσὶν ἐπὶ γλαφυραῖς, ὁτιὴ δίχα θυμὸν ἔχουσιν.
ταῦτα μὲν ἐντεῦθεν. ἐκ δ᾽ Αἰγύπτου τὰ κρεμαστὰ
ἱστία καὶ βίβλους, ἀπὸ δ᾽ αὖ Συρίας λιβανωτόν.
ἡ δὲ καλὴ Κρήτη κυπάριττον τοῖσι θεοῖσιν,
ἡ Λιβύη δ᾽ ἐλέφαντα πολὺν παρέχει κατὰ πρᾶσιν·
ἡ Ῥόδος ἀσταφίδας <τε> καὶ ἰσχάδας ἡδυονείρους.
αὐτὰρ ἀπ᾽ Εὐβοίας ἀπίους καὶ ἴφια μῆλα·
ἀνδράποδ᾽ ἐκ Φρυγίας, ἀπὸ δ᾽ Ἀρκαδίας ἀπικούρους.
αἱ Παγασαὶ δούλους καὶ στιγματίας παρέχουσι.
τὰς δὲ Διὸς βαλάνους καὶ ἀμύγδαλα σιγαλόεντα
Παφλαγόνες παρέχουσι· τὰ γάρ <τ᾽> ἀναθήματα δαιτός.
† Φοινίκη δ᾽ αὖ † καρπὸν φοίνικος καὶ σεμίδαλιν·

cf. Comentale (2017, 260). The comedy is dated to the late 430s–early 420s BC (cf. *e.g.* Olson 2007, 151 and Pellegrino 2000, 197 n. 3).

[14] This has led some scholars to consider it an out-and-out parodic poem rather than a comic fragment, or even both: cf. *e.g.* Gilula (2000, 82) and Pellegrino (2012, 143 n. 9) and Comentale (2017, 37). For a detailed commentary and an updated bibliography on this fragment, cf. Gilula (2000, 75–90), Pellegrino (2000, 195–225; 2012, 141–61), Wilkins (2000, 158–62; 306), Olson (2007, 158–63), Ceschi (2015), Comentale (2017, 249–75). The identity of the speaker is impossible to know for sure (cf. *e.g.* Comentale 2017, 261). Some scholars (such as Wilamowitz 1921 and Quaglia 2007, 248) have suggested that the speaker might have been a rhapsode: this would be a close parallel with the fragment of Hegemon of Thasos, in which the speaker is a bad rhapsode too. The invocation to the Muses for the introduction of a catalogue is in itself a common epic pattern (‘*Heurematakataloge*’): cf. Kleingunther (1933, 143–51), Murray (1981) and West (1985, 1–11).

[15] The translations of the fragments of Hermippus are taken from Storey (2011).

Καρχηδὼν δάπιδας καὶ ποικίλα προσκεφάλαια.

Tell now for me, Muses who have your home on Olympus, all the good things that Dionysus brought for people here, ever since he sailed as a trader over the wine-dark sea in his black ship. From Cyrene stalks of silphium and ox hides, from the Hellespont mackerel and salted fish of all sorts, from Italy [Thessaly?] grain and sides of beef. From Sitalces, mange for the Spartans; from Perdiccas many ships full of lies. Syracuse exports pork and cheese, and may Poseidon destroy the people of Corcyra with their hollow ships, because their hearts are divided. That's from those places. From Egypt hanging gear, sails, and papyrus cables, from Syria frankincense. The beautiful land of Crete exports cypress wood for the gods' statues, Libya much ivory for sale, and Rhodes raisins and figs that give good dreams. Then from Euboea pears and plump apples, slaves from Phrygia, mercenaries from Arcadia. Pagasae exports slaves and branded men, the Paphlagonians hazel nuts and shiny almonds, the crowning touches to a feast. Phoenicia <exports> dates of the palm tree and hard wheat, Carthage rugs and multicoloured cushions.

Just like fr. 63, Hermipp. fr. inc. fab. 77 is characterised by several Homeric clues. The content of the fragment can be divided into two parts. The first (vv. 1–5) is a catalogue of wines with a description of their peculiar features; the second (vv. 6–12) is a praise of the unknown wine σάπριας ('old, mellow wine'):

† Μενδαίω μὲν ἐνουροῦσιν καὶ † θεοὶ αὐτοὶ
στρώμασιν ἐν μαλακοῖς. Μάγνητα δὲ μειλιχόδωρον
καὶ Θάσιον, τῷ δὴ μήλων ἐπιδέδρομεν ὀδμή,
τοῦτον ἐγὼ κρίνω πολὺ πάντων εἶναι ἄριστον
τῶν ἄλλων οἴνων, μετ᾽ ἀμύμονα Χῖον ἄλυπον.
ἔστι δέ τις οἶνος, τὸν δὲ σαπρίαν καλέουσιν,
οὗ καὶ ἀπὸ στόματος στάμνων ὑπανοιγομενάων
ὄζει ἴων, ὄζει δὲ ῥόδων, ὄζει δ᾽ ὑακίνθου
ὀσμὴ θεσπεσία, κατὰ πᾶν δ᾽ ἔχει ὑψερεφὲς δῶ,
ἀμβροσία καὶ νέκταρ ὁμοῦ. τοῦτ᾽ ἐστὶ τὸ νέκταρ.
τούτου χρὴ παρέχειν πίνειν ἐν δαιτὶ θαλείῃ
τοῖσιν ἐμοῖσι φίλοις, τοῖς δ᾽ ἐχθροῖς ἐκ Πεπαρήθου.

The gods themselves piss Mendaean <wine> in their soft beds. Now as for the sweet gift from Magnesia and the wine from Thasos, from which wafts a scent of apples, these two I judge to be much the best of all other wines, after the blameless Chian, destroyer of grief. But there is a wine, which men call 'Full Mellow.' When the jar is opened, from the mouth drifts the heavenly scent of violets, of roses, and hyacinths, a heavenly bouquet, which fills that high-roofed hall, ambrosia mixed with nectar. This is

nectar, and this is what I must serve for my friends to drink at a grand banquet — for my enemies <wine> from Preparethus.

However, as we have seen in relation to the passage by Polemon (cf. *supra* pp. 25–8), we know that the epic metre was already employed in the plays of Epicharmus. Beside fr. 113, which I have already examined in relation to the comic techniques of parody (cf. *supra* p. 116), Epicharmus employs the hexameter in fr. 121, which belonged to the comedy called *Sirens*:[16]

λαοὶ τοξοχίτωνες, ἀκούετε Σειρηνάων

Bow-clad men, listen to the Sirens!

The speaker of the fragment is unknown, but it has been plausibly suggested that one or more of the Sirens are referring to Odysseus and his companions, defined as λαοὶ τοξοχίτωνες, an expression which is in all likelihood humorously based on the epic expression κατὰ λαὸν Ἀχαιῶν χαλκοχιτώνων (‘along the people of bronze-armoured Achaeans’, *Il.* 2.163). What is interesting in the verse — which is clearly denoted by epic language — is the word Σειρηνάων, a purely Homeric form that ‘violates’ the Doric dialect of Epicharmus and occupies the last two feet of the verse: this proves that Epicharmus chose to play with the Homeric language even if that meant to break the flow of his own poetic language and was able to keep his game of allusions on a refined level.[17] Cratinus too made an extensive use of hexameters in his plays.[18] In fr.

[16] Epicharmus used the hexameter poorly, as the passage of Polemon proves: κέχρηται δὲ καὶ Ἐπίχαρμος ὁ Συρακόσιος ἔν τισι τῶν δραμάτων ἐπ᾽ ὀλίγον. Cf. also Phillips (1959, 62) and Cassio (2002, 71–2). For a commentary, cf. Tosetti (2018, 598–603). Another fragment which belongs to the corpus of Epicharmus (fr. 224) probably constitutes the end of a hexameter, but the scant evidence prevents us from any conclusions: cf. *e.g.* Rodríguez-Noriega Guillén (2012, 78). The text and the translation of the fragments of Epicharmus are taken from Olson (2007).

[17] Cf. *e.g.* Tosetti (2018, 598–603). A different hypothesis has been formulated by Cassio (2002, 72). Moreover, the verse is a spondaic hexameter: this makes it definitely more solemn than a ‘normal’ one.

[18] It has been suggested (at least since Zieliński 1887, 10) that Cratinus employed the hexameter in sections (*epirrhēma, agōn*) that will be later composed in tetrameters: cf. Pretagostini (1982) and Quaglia (2007, 250 n. 32). This is the case for instance of the hexametric fr. 6, which was ostensibly recited by the coryphaeus (cf. *e.g.* Bianchi 2016, 62–71). Other hexametric fragments of Cratinus are *e.g.* frr. 7 (cf. Bianchi 2016, 72–9), 183 (cf. Quaglia 2007, 245 n. 20), 253, 255, 344, 428, 501, 506 (cf. Olson and Seaberg 2018, 125–349): others might be postulated or conjectured. In general, some fragments are too short to form a complete idea about them or are just Homeric quotations that without a context cannot give us much information. Another example is Call. Com. fr. 9 (καὶ δέξαι τηνδὶ μεταν̣ιπτρίδα τῆς Ὑγιείας, ‘take this after-washing cup of Health’), which belongs to the comedy called *Cyclops*: cf. Bagordo (2014, 158–61).

8 (from the play *Archilochuses*), he uses epic language for the description of a culinary subject:[19]

> ἦ μὲν δὴ πίννῃσι καὶ ὀστρείοισιν ὁμοίη.
>
> She is very much indeed like mussels and oysters.

Fr. 149 parodies the Homeric passage in which Odysseus and his companions enter in the cave of the Cyclops and eat his food: here, Homeric words such as πανημέριοι ('all day long', cf. *e.g. Il.* 1.472) and δαινύμενοι ('feasting on', cf. *e.g. Od.* 1.369) are mixed with vulgar words such as the verb χορταζόμενοι ('getting fat') and πυριάτῃ ('creamed cheese'):[20]

> ἦσθε πανημέριοι χορταζόμενοι γάλα λευκόν,
> πυὸν δαινύμενοι, κἀμπιμπλάμενοι πυριάτῃ.
>
> You sat here all day, getting fat on white milk,
> dining on beestings, and filling yourselves with creamed cheese.

The reformulation of the epic passage is humorous: Polyphemus accuses his 'guests' of taking advantage of his hospitality by vegetating in his cave, eating his food and drinking his milk: in other terms, Odysseus and his companions are portrayed as parasites. The bad behaviour of Odysseus and his crew pushes Polyphemus to threaten them (fr. 150):

> ἀνθ᾽ ὧν πάντας ἑλὼν ὑμᾶς ἐρίηρας ἑταίρους,
> φρύξας χἀψήσας, κἀπανθρακίσας κὠπτήσας,
> εἰς ἅλμην τε καὶ ὀξάλμην κᾆτ᾽ ἐς σκοροδάλμην
> χλιαρὸν ἐμβάπτων, ὃς ἂν ὀπτότατός μοι ἁπάντων
> ὑμῶν φαίνηται, κατατρώξομαι, ὦ στρατιῶται.
>
> In return for which I shall seize all you 'loyal comrades',

[19] Cf. Bianchi (2016, 79–84). The speaker and the addressee of the fragment are unknown. Luppe (1969, 205) has suggested that the speaker might be Homer, who was probably a character of the comedy: if this hypothesis is correct, we would be in front of a mock-epic verse recited by Homer himself. The entire comedy, at any rate, shows a criticism (or at least a devaluation) of Homer and of his poetical skills (cf. *e.g.* also fr. 6): this makes this hypothesis even more likely.

[20] This is interesting not only because we find a reference to food, typical of comedy, but also because of the skilful construction of the sentence: the first half is Homeric, the second employs everyday language.

roast you, boil you, barbecue and bake you,
dip you into brine and vinegar and warm garlic sauce,
and whichever of you soldiers all appears to be
the best cooked, that's the one I shall munch down.

The epic background is hilariously reworked.[21] First, the expression ἐρίηρας ἑταίρους is commonly pronounced by Odysseus (cf. *e.g. Od.* 9.100), while here it is put in the Cyclops' mouth, thus creating a sort of 'estrangement' in the audience; second, the epic language clashes with other words of lower register in the triplet (cf. *e.g.* φρύξας, χἀψήσας, ὀξάλμην, σκοροδάλμην); third, there is a paronomasia of ὁπλότατος with ὀπτότατος in the Homeric-sounding expression ὀπτότατός μοι ἁπάντων (cf. *Od.* 15.364 ὁπλοτάτην τέκε παίδων) .[22] Three fragments (frr. 222–4) of the comedy called *The Men of Seriphos* are also hexametric.[23] The first verse of fr. 222, in pure epic style, is a parody of the instructions given by Circe to Odysseus in order to reach Ithaca in *Od.* 12.39:[24]

{A.} ἐς Συρίαν δ᾽ ἐνθένδ᾽ ἀφικνῇ μετέωρος ὑπ᾽ αὔρας.
{B.} ἱμάτιον μοχθηρόν, ὅταν βορρᾶς καταπνεύσῃ.

(A) From there you will travel high up on the breezes to Syria.
(B) A rather useless garment, when the North Wind blows.

The first verse of fr. 223 is a clear parody of *Od*. 4.84:[25]

εἶτα Σάβας ἀφικνῇ καὶ Σιδονίους καὶ Ἐρεμβούς, ἔς τε πόλιν δούλων,
ἀνδρῶν νεοπλουτοπονήρων, αἰσχρῶν, Ἀνδροκλέων, †Διονυσοκουρώνων.

[21] For the non-Homeric forms, cf. Silk (2000, 305).
[22] Cf. Amado Rodríguez (1994, 106), Silk (2000, 305), Quaglia (2007, 255–6).
[23] The *Seriphioi* were the inhabitants of an island connected with the myth of Perseus; as suggested by the title, therefore, the comedy is in all likelihood a bathetic version of the myth of Perseus.
[24] The humour lies mostly in the misunderstanding of the word Συρίαν by the second character, probably Perseus: cf. Amado Rodríguez (1994, 109).
[25] *Od.* 4.84 Αἰθίοπάς θ᾽ ἱκόμην καὶ Σιδονίους καὶ Ἐρεμβοὺς. The only verse of fr. 224 (οἰκοῦσιν φεύγοντες, ἀίδρυτον κακὸν ἄλλοις, 'They live in exile, an unsettling problem for others') does not show any remarkable Homeric influence (apart from the participle φεύγοντες between the first and the second foot of the hexameter, which is attested *e.g.* in *Il.* 11.327, or the expression αὐτὰρ τοῖς ἄλλοισι κακὸν μέγα πᾶσι φυτεῦσαι; in *Il.* 15.134). However, its metre suggests that it may have been set in a passage characterised by epic diction. The extremely fragmentary nature of fr. 226 (πολυτρήτοις φῳσί, 'with often-pricked blisters'), beloning to the same comedy, shows an adjective that occurs only in Homer in the form σπόγγιοισι πολυτρήτοισι (cf. *e.g. Od.* 1.111). Amado Rodríguez (1994, 100) has noticed that the meaning of the adjective is different in Homer and in Cratinus, passing from the 'passive' value of 'porous, full of holes' to the causative one of 'which makes holes': this semantic shift may have had some comic implications.

> Then you will come to the Sabae and the Sidonians and the Erembi, and to the City of Slaves, nasty nouveaux riches, disgusting men, like Androcles, †Dionysocourones†.

Frr. inc. fab. 349–54 are also interesting for several reasons. Fr. 349 is a reworking of Hes. *Op.* 299–300, a passage in which Hesiod invites the addressee of his poem to hard work:[26]

> ἔσθιε καὶ σῇ γαστρὶ δίδου χάριν, ὄφρα σε λιμὸς
> ἐχθαίρῃ, Κοννᾶς δὲ πολυστέφανός σε φιλήσῃ.
>
> Eat and indulge your stomach, so that Hunger
> may hate you, and many-crowned Connas may love you.

In the comic fragment, on the contrary, the speaker urges an anonymous character to behave like a glutton.[27] In fr. 351, the word ῥοδοδάκτυλος ('rosy-fingered', a hapax in comedy) is a common and famous formulaic epic epithet of the goddess Dawn (cf. *e.g. Il.* 1.477, *Od.* 2.1, Hes. *Op*. 601), but it is applied in a comic way:

> ταυτὶ καὶ τολμᾷς σὺ λέγειν ῥοδοδάκτυλος οὖσα;
>
> And being rosy-fingered you dare say this?

Fr. inc. fab. 352 hints at the deep knowledge of the Homeric hypotext that Cratinus could expect in his audience:

> χαλκίδα κικλήσκουσι θεοί, ἄνδρες δὲ κύβηλιν.
>
> The gods call it a copper pot, but men a cheese grater.

The verse is an almost *verbatim* quotation of *Il.* 14.291, a passage which describes the bird into which Sleep transforms himself to avoid being seen by Zeus.[28] Cratinus plays

[26] This is an element which shows, once again, that epic parody could play both with Homeric (heroic) and Hesiodic (didactic) epic. Fr. 350, by contrast, does not present any particular Homeric allusion. Cf. Olson and Seaberg (2018, 137–51) for a commentary on the poems.
[27] The word λιμός ('hunger') is here 'humanised', thus heigthening the Hesiodic echo, since personifications are extremely common in Hesiod's work.
[28] *Il.* 14.291 χαλκίδα κικλήσκουσι θεοί, ἄνδρες δὲ κύμινδιν.

on the technique of the *aprosdoketon*, which originates here from the para-etymology and paronomasia of χαλκίς (the name of a bird) and χαλκός ('bronze'), a word frequently employed to describe the material of the Homeric weapons.[29]

Some hexametric verses are attested in the fragments of poets who are not mentioned in the passage in which Athenaeus reports Polemon's discussion on the comedians who included parodies in their works (*i.e.* Epicharmus, Cratinus and Hermippus). This demonstrates that other comedians may have probably been listed among the authors of 'parody' in its wider meaning, and that this practice was definitely more common than the evidence demonstrates. Just like Hermippus' fr. 63, for instance, Metagenes ludicrously employs the Homeric structure of the catalogue to make a list of different types of *hetairai* (fr. 4).[30] From a linguistic point of view, the verses recall the expressions used in epic poetry to indicate a transition to another subject (v. 2, νῦν δ᾽ αὖθ᾽ … ἀγορεύω) and to describe the soldiers who fall in battle:[31]

> […] ὑμῖν ὀρχηστρίδας εἶπον ἑταίρας
> ὡραίας πρότερον, νῦν δ᾽ αὖθ᾽ ὑμῖν ἀγορεύω
> ἄρτι χνοαζούσας αὐλητρίδας, αἵ τε τάχιστα
> ἀνδρῶν φορτηγῶν ὑπὸ γούνατα μισθοῦ ἔλυσαν.
>
> […] I told you earlier about the lovely dancing prostitutes, now I am informing you of the aulos girls, with the early down of womanhood, who for a fee very quickly sap the strength of stevedores.

Fr. inc. fab. 19 is a parody of *Il.* 12.243 (εἷς οἰωνὸς ἄριστος ἀμύνεσθαι περὶ πάτρης), a passage in which Hector replies to the warning of Polydamas against lunching the attack because of an adverse omen:[32]

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[29] Cf. Pellegrino (1998, 297–303), Quaglia (2007, 243) and Olson and Seaberg (2017, 143–5), who suggest that fr. 353, if it is not an oracle (as fr. 354 probably is), might represent a reworking of the admonition about the abuse of the legal system in Hes. *Op.* 255–66 and about unjust profits (v. 362).
[30] Cf. Orth (2015, 480–6).
[31] Cf. *e.g. Il.* 15.291, *Od.* 14.236 (γούνατα … ἔλυσαν): further parallels in Orth (2015, 401). Additional epic echoes are the use of the Ionism γούνατα and the use of the tmesis ὑπὸ … ἔλυσαν. Pellegrino (1998, with further bibliography on the subject) reports that the expression is sometimes attested in Homer in an erotic context: in *Od.* 212–13, for instance, the expression is used to describe the feelings of the pretenders struck by Penelope's charm. In addition, it is used by Eumaeus in *Od.* 14.69 to criticise Helen for her responsibility in provoking the Trojan War: if so, an epic expression employed to describe Helen would have been used here to refer to prostitutes. Another Homeric formula in the fragment is αἵ τε τάχιστα, which echoes the epic *clausula* αἵ κε τάχιστα (cf. *e.g. Il.* 9.165). The translations of Metagenes' fragments are taken from Storey (2011).
[32] Cf. Pellegrino (1998, 338–9) and Orth (2015, 482–5).

εἷς οἰωνὸς ἄριστος ἀμύνεσθαι περὶ δείπνου.

There is only one excellent omen: to fight for one's … dinner.

The substitution of ἀμύνεσθαι περὶ πάτρης ('to fight for one's country') with ἀμύνεσθαι περὶ δείπνου ('to fight for one's dinner') plays on the expectation fostered in the audience by the epic verse and on the substitution of a heroic goal with a petty one. Two other hexametric fragments are attested in the corpus of Pherecrates (fr. 162) and in that of Plato Comicus (fr. 3):[33]

μηδὲ σύ γ᾽ ἄνδρα φίλον καλέσας ἐπὶ δαῖτα θάλειαν
ἄχθου ὁρῶν παρεόντα· κακὸς γὰρ ἀνὴρ τόδε ῥέζει·
ἀλλὰ μάλ᾽ εὔκηλος τέρπου φρένα τέρπε τ᾽ ἐκεῖνον.

When you have invited a friend to a really fine feast, do not get upset
when you see him arrive, for that's how an inferior man behaves.
But relax, put a smile in your heart, and welcome him.

ὦ Κινύρα, βασιλεῦ Κυπρίων ἀνδρῶν δασυπρώκτων,
παῖς σοι κάλλιστος μὲν ἔφυ θαυμαστότατός τε
πάντων ἀνθρώπων, δύο δ᾽ αὐτὸν δαίμον᾽ ὀλεῖτον,
ἡ μὲν ἐλαυνομένη λαθρίοις ἐρετμοῖς, ὁ δ᾽ ἐλαύνων.

Cinyras, king of the Cypriots, men with hairy butts, a son has been born to you, the fairest and most amazing of all men, but two deities will destroy him, the goddess who is driven on secret oars and the god who does the driving.[34]

Pherecrates' fr. 162 advises on how to treat guests at banquets and can be divided into two parts: the first (vv. 1–3) is characterised by epic language, while the second (vv. 4–13) is not.[35] In the first triplet, in particular, Pherecrates has combined the Hesiodic expression τὸν φιλέοντ᾽ἐπὶ δαῖτα καλεῖν (Hes. *Op.* 342) with the Homeric δαῖτα θάλειαν (cf. *e.g. Il.* 7. 475). Analogously, Plato Comicus exploits epic formulas for the

[33] Cf. Olson (2007, 318–20). The Hesiodic remembrance of the passage is stated also in the source of the fragment: see Ath. 9.364b. For Hesiodic echoes in the Old Comedy, cf. the list made by Olson (2007, 125).
[34] The translations of the the fragments of Plato Comicus are taken from Storey (2011).
[35] The fragment has been attributed to different authors: for a critical analysis of the evidence, cf. *e.g.* Olson (2007, 319).

abusive description of Cinyras, the king of Cypriots, in a light-hearted, caricatural oracular context.

Another interesting passage which proves the reuse of the epic metre for the description of 'low' subjects is fr. 189 of Plato Comicus.[36] In the first (iambic) verses of the fragment (vv. 1–4), the speaker (probably Phaon, the protagonist of the eponymous comedy) declaims to an unknown character hexametric recipes which can help him to stimulate his lost sexual strength:[37]

ἐγὼ δ᾽ ἐνθάδ᾽ ἐν τῇ ἐρημίᾳ
τουτὶ διελθεῖν βούλομαι τὸ βιβλίον
πρὸς ἐμαυτόν. {B.} ἔστι δ᾽, ἀντιβολῶ σε, τοῦτο τί;
{A.} Φιλοξένου καινή τις ὀψαρτυσία.
{B.} ἐπίδειξον αὐτὴν ἥτις ἔστ᾽. {A.} ἄκουε δή.
ἄρξομαι ἐκ βολβοῖο, τελευτήσω δ᾽ ἐπὶ θύννον.
{B.} ἐπὶ θύννον; οὐκοῦν †τῆς τελευτ† πολὺ
κράτιστον ἐνταυθὶ τετάχθαι τάξεως.
{A.} βολβοὺς μὲν σποδιᾷ δαμάσας καταχύσματι δεύσας
ὡς πλείστους διάτρωγε· τὸ γὰρ δέμας ἀνέρος ὀρθοῖ.
καὶ τάδε μὲν δὴ ταῦτα· θαλάσσης δ᾽ ἐς τέκν᾽ ἄνειμι
οὐδὲ λοπὰς κακόν ἐστιν· ἀτὰρ τὸ τάγηνον ἄμεινον, οἶμαι
ὀρφών αἰολίαν συνόδοντά τε καρχαρίαν τε
μὴ τέμνειν, μή σοι νέμεσις θεόθεν καταπνεύσῃ·
ἀλλ᾽ ὅλον ὀπτήσας παράθες· πολλὸν γὰρ ἄμεινον.
πουλύποδος †πλεκτὴ δ᾽, ἂν ἐπιλήψῃ† κατὰ καιρόν,
ἐφθὴ τῆς ὀπτῆς, ἣν ᾖ μείζων, πολὺ κρείττων·
ἢν ὀπταὶ δὲ δύ᾽ ὦσ᾽, ἐφθῇ κλαίειν ἀγόρευω.
τρίγλη δ᾽ οὐκ ἐθέλει νεύρων ἐπιήρανος εἶναι·
παρθένου Ἀρτέμιδος γὰρ ἔφυ καὶ στύματα μισεῖ.
σκορπίος αὖ {B.} παίσειέ γέ σου τὸν πρωκτὸν
ὑπελθών.

(A) Here in solitude I want to read this book to myself.
(B) Please tell me, what is it?
(A) It's a brand-new cookbook by Philoxenus.

[36] The continuation of this metrical practice in the Middle Comedy proves its widespread and common nature: cf. Antiphanes (frr. 194, 196) and Eubulus (fr. 107). The same metrical structure is attested in Aristophanes' *Birds* (vv. 959–91), in a passage in which Pisaeterus has a comic exchange with a soothsayer who concocts false oracles. According to Degani (1977, 34), a structure *hemiepes* + iambic dimeter catalectic (the same attested in Archil. fr. 196) might be attested also in Cratin. fr. 10, whose metrical structure is doubtful (cf. *e.g.* Bianchi 2016, 90–1). Cf. Kloss (2001, 75–7).

[37] For a more detailed commentary on the passage, including the *vexata quaestio* of the identity of the character called Philoxenus and of the actual authorship of these verses, cf. Pellegrino (2000), Quaglia (2007, 252–53), Olson (2007, 268–71), Beta (2009, 178–81). At any rate, what is interesting in the passage is the use of the epic metre to describe gastronomic subjects: cf. *e.g.* Degani (1982, 29–54) and Olson and Sens (1999).

(B) Give me a sample of what it's like.
(A) Listen here. 'I shall begin with bulb and conclude with tunny fish.'
(B) With a tunny fish? In that case . . . it's by far the best thing to be posted here in the last ranks.
(A) 'Subdue the bulbs with hot ash, soak them with sauce, and munch down as many as you can, for then a man's body stands straight up. So much for that. I shall now pass on to the children of the sea.'
'Not that a stewing dish is bad, but the frying pan is better, in my opinion.'
'And do not slice up the sea perch or the speckle fish or sea bream or shark, lest Nemesis from the gods breathe upon you, but roast and serve them whole. They're much better that way. If you . . . of an octopus in the right season, it is much better boiled than roasted, if it's a large one. But if there are two roasted ones, then I say to the boiled one 'get lost.' The red mullet does not tend to be helpful to the penis, for she belongs to the maiden Artemis and hates erections. Now the scorpion fish . . .'
(B) I hope, will creep up and sting you in the ass.

The fragment displays in several points a comic *detorsio* of epic models.[38] In v. 6, the use of the expression ἄρξομαι ἐκ βολβοῖο is an evident allusion to epic language, given the use of the verb ἄρξομαι — which is not Homeric, but very common in proemial sentences — with the preposition ἐκ (in place of the more prosastic ἀπό) and the epic ending of the singular genitive -οῖο.[39] In v. 9, the elevated verb δαμάζω ('to tame', 'subdue', cf. *e.g. Od.* 9.454 and Hes. *Th.* 865) is used in connection with a vulgar culinary object, the *bolbos* ('purse tassel', a perennial bulbous plant similar to an onion).[40] The expression μή σοι νέμεσις θεόθεν καταπνεύσῃ (in v. 14) recalls analogous epic expressions attested in the *Odyssey* (cf. *e.g.* 2.136–7, 16.447). In v. 15, πολλὸν γὰρ ἄμεινον is a common Homeric *clausula* widely attested in the Homeric poems and in Hesiod. In v. 20, the *iunctura* νεύρων ἐπιήρανος echoes the Homeric ποδῶν ἐπιήρανα (*Od.* 19.343).

4.3 Hexameters and *iamboi*

As I have stated in the introduction to this chapter, some evidence suggests that in the fifth century BC epic parody exploited the mixture of hexameters and *iamboi* for comic

[38] Cf. Pellegrino (2000, 254) for a complete and more detailed list of the passages.
[39] For further bibliography, cf. Pellegrino (2000, 245–6). In addition, it has been argued (cf. Scherrans 1896, 16 and Montanari 1983, 125) that the sentence would be a more specific parodic echo of the Homeric expression in *Il.* 9.97.
[40] Cf. Montanari (1983, 123).

goals, in accordance to a mostly overlooked but well-attested practice that goes back to the very origins of Greek literature. This hypothesis finds support in the reading of the only extant source on this topic and in the fact that such mixture of different metres is well attested in earlier and contemporary humorous poems, whose affinity with classical epic parody has been highlighted in the previous chapters. Our only source is the proverb *CPG* 1.406, 8 (cf. *supra* p. 38) which attests that Hegemon of Thasos, when he could not come up with the words during his performances, occasionally inserted the expression καὶ τὸ Πέρδικος σκέλος (‘and the Perdix’s leg’*)* within his parodies. The metrical structure of the expression, which cannot fit a hexameter, strongly suggests the existence of the practice of mixing different metres: the sudden and unexpected substitution of the most elevated metre (the hexameter) with a less elevated one results in comic outcomes.[41]

The first occurrence of this metrical peculiarity is attested in the Pseudo-Homeric *Margites*. The importance of this poem for the investigation of the archaic stages of Greek parody has already been demonstrated: as I have shown, within his investigation of the origins of poetry Aristotle offers crucial information on the archaic stages of epic parody and proves the existence of a comic strand of epic — represented chiefly by the *Margites* — along with the serious one (*Po.* 1448b24–1449a6). In this same passage, Aristotle implies that these archaic comic poems were originally composed in hexameters, but that in time iambic sections had been added to them:

> ἐν οἷς κατὰ τὸ ἁρμόττον καὶ τὸ ἰαμβεῖον ἦλθε μέτρον διὸ καὶ ἰαμβεῖον καλεῖται νῦν, ὅτι ἐν τῷ μέτρῳ τούτῳ ἰάμβιζον ἀλλήλους.
>
> In these poems, it was aptness which brought the iambic metre too into use — precisely why it is called ‘iambic’ now, because it was in this metre that they lampooned [iambizein] one another.

The expression ἐν οἷς κατὰ τὸ ἁρμόττον καὶ τὸ ἰαμβεῖον ἦλθε μέτρον implies that the iambic metre was introduced *alongside* another metre; it is then reasonable to think that this other metre was the hexameter and that such poems were thus originally

[41] The metre recalls iambic, but, as reported by Aristophanes of Byzantium (fr. 12.3), it would be rather considered to be a-metrical: Πέρδικος σκέλος, ἧς καὶ Ἀριστοφάνης *ἐν ταῖς ἀμέτροις* παροιμίαις μνημονεύει (‘the leg of Perdix, which also Aristophanes recalls *among the a-metrical proverbs*’).

composed in hexameters. The curious metrical structure of the poem is confirmed by the second-century AD grammarian Hephaestion (59.21 Consbruch), who reports that it consisted of μετρικὰ ἄτακτα ('disordered metres') and that it displayed iambic verses interspersed in the hexameters, probably without regular order:[42]

> μετρικὰ δὲ ἄτακτα … οἷός ἐστιν ὁ Μαργίτης ὁ εἰς Ὅμηρον ἀναφερόμενος, ἐν ᾧι παρέσπαρται τοῖς ἔπεσιν ἰαμβικά, καὶ ταῦτα οὐ κατ᾽ ἴσον σύστημα.
>
> Unregulated metres … such as the *Margites* attributed to Homer, in which there are iambic lines scattered among the hexameters, and on no regular system.

The same mixture of hexameters and *iamboi* is attested also in two iambic poets who exploited the same thematic and linguistic techniques which will be later appropriated by the genre of epic parody, namely Archilochus and Hipponax. As far as Archilochus is concerned, we know that he did not strictly compose hexametric poetry; however, some of his fragments do attest to the occasional presence of hexametres within his iambic poems.[43] The 'Cologne epodes' are the most remarkable in this sense: frr. 196 and 196a are formed of iambic trimeters, but they are both followed by an unusual metrical form composed of masculine *hemiepes* and an acatalectic iambic dimeter.[44] Since the 'Cologne epodes', demonstrate Archilochus' ability to play with the Homeric model, the dactylic component of these verses suggests that the Parian poet was already aware of the comic potential and of combining it with a less 'solemn' metre, the iambus.[45] The same uncommon metrical practice is well attested in some fragments of Hipponax, which are equally characterised by parodic tones. An

[42] For a more specific analysis of the passage, cf. Morelli (2007). This metrical structure is indeed confirmed by fr. 7, a fragment of the *Margites* that I have previously mentioned and that is characterised by the alternance of iambic and dactylic metres (cf. *supra* pp. 132–3).

[43] Cf. the *Appendix Metrica* compiled by Tarditi (1968, 208–16) for a list of the dactylic metres used by Archilochus; cf. also Gentili (1993, 33–5) for some considerations on the meters of his poems. The most important evidence on this point occurs in Theoc. *Ep.* 21 and D.Chr. *Or.* 55, 6. Depending on the interpretation of these passages, some scholars (cf. *e.g.* Notopoulos 1966 and Breitenstein 1971, 14) believe that Archilochus composed also hexameters, others (cf. *e.g.* Gentili 1977, 35–6) think that he did not.

[44] A mixture of iambic dimeters and feminine *hemiepes* is attested also, for instance, in fr. 193, which likewise displays some epic references: cf. *e.g.* Russello (1993, 234).

[45] It may be argued that double-short metre does not necessarily mean epic, as other archaic poetic genres and poets (cf. *e.g.* Theognides' elegies) used dactylic metres (including Archilochus himself): its use in fragments characterised by comic tones, however, suggests indeed a reference to epic. For some considerations on the different '*ethos*' of hexameter and iambus, cf. Condorelli (2014).

illustrative example is fr. 10, a iambic poem which wittily recalls Homeric invocations and which is characterised by a dactylic ending (Μαιάδος Ἑρμῆ):[46]

ἐρέω γὰρ οὕτω· "Κυλλήνιε Μαιάδος Ἑρμῆ."

for I will speak thus: "Cyllenian Hermes, son of Maia"

An analogous metrical combination is attested in the so-called 'Strasbourg Epodes' (frr. 194–6), three fragments conventionally attributed to Hipponax characterised by iambic trimeters mixed with *hemiepes*:[47]

.[
η[
π.[ ]ν[...]....[
κύμ[ατι] πλα[ζόμ]ενος·
κἀν Σαλμυδ[ησσ]ῷ̣ι γυμνὸν εὐφρονε̣.[
Θρήϊκες ἀκρό[κ]ομοι
λάβοιεν—ἔνθα πόλλ' ἀναπλήσαι κακὰ
δούλιον ἄρτον ἔδων—
ῥίγει πεπηγότ' αὐτόν· ἐκ δὲ τοῦ χνόου
φυκία πόλλ' ἐπ̣έχοι,
κροτέοι δ' ὀδόντας, ὡς [κ]ύων ἐπὶ στόμα
κείμενος ἀκρασίηι
ἄκρον παρὰ ῥηγμῖνα κυμα....δ̣ο̣υ̣·
ταῦτ' ἐθέλοιμ' ἂν ἰδε̣ῖν,
ὅς μ' ἠδίκησε, λ[ὰ]ξ δ' ἐπ' ὀρκίοις ἔβη,
τὸ πρὶν ἑταῖρος [ἐ]ών.

drifting about on the wave. And at Salmydessus may the top-knotted Thracians give him naked a most kindly reception — there he will have full measure of a multitude of woes, eating the bread of slaves — stiff from cold. As he comes out from the foam may he vomit much seaweed and may his teeth chatter while he lies on his face like a dog at the edge of the

[46] The same metrical peculiarity is probably attested in fr. 11 (cf. *supra* p. 70 n. 60), but the poor state of preservation of the poem impedes a fuller understanding. From a textual point of view, fr. 10 is a reworked version of the epic invocation to Hermes attested *e.g.* in *h.Ap.* 408 (Κυλλήνιε, Μαιάδος υἱέ) and 550 (ἄλλο δὲ τοι ἐρέω, Μαίης ἐρικυδέος υἱέ): on this point, cf. Kleinknecht (1967, 73) and Degani (1991, 34). The fragmentary nature of the poem does not allow to know whether the poem was actually humorous: other comic references to Hermes in the fragments of Hipponax, however, support this hypothesis. In general, the fact that this intrinsically comic metrical mixture appears in an invocation to Hermes, a god traditionally portrayed by means of comic tones, may not be accidental.

[47] I report here, for the sake of brevity, only fr. 194. Fr. 195 is almost entirely lost, but the metrical structure is probably the same one of the other two poems (cf. *e.g.* Nicolosi 2007, 102). On the metrical structure of the epodes, cf. Nicolosi (2007, 35, n. 45), who lists other poems of different authors characterised by the same metrical form.

> surf, his strength spent, . . . This is what I'd like him to experience, who treated me unjustly by trampling on his oaths, he who was formerly my friend.

The humorous tone of the poems is still debated; even so, the extensive reuse of Homeric themes and language for the depiction of a 'reverse *propemptikon*' seems to represent a valuable indication of an allusion to the epic model. If the wretched protagonist of the fragment is to be taken as an *alter ego* of Odysseus, we would be in front of a passage characterised by strong Homeric allusions reformulated in a new metrical context.

The same metrical structure is attested in fr. 14 of Xenophanes, a poem which presumably belongs to the collection of *Silloi* — a collection of poems of scoptic nature — and explicitly shows Xenophanes' criticism of divine anthropomorphism.[48] The fragment exhibits an interesting association of a *iambos* (v. 1) and a hexameter (v. 2):[49]

> ἀλλ' οἱ βροτοὶ δοκέουσι γεννᾶσθαι θεούς,
> τὴν σφετέρην δ' ἐσθῆτα ἔχειν φωνήν τε δέμας τε.
>
> But mortals suppose that gods are born,
> Wear their own clothes and have a voice and a body

Even though the content of the fragment is not strictly parodic, the poem is surely characterised by a caustic criticism of human's beliefs and by some epic linguistic memories. Moreover, the fact that Xenophanes — a rhapsode who occasionally dedicated himself to parody — used this curious metrical structure has surely to be considered, as it might represent an additional proof of the technical ability of rhapsodes to play with hexameters, mixing them with different metres.[50]

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[48] This uncommon metrical combination cannot be ascribed to Xenophanes' metrical inaccuracy, whose mastery of the metre is by contrast reported by the sources. In a passage of his work (14.632c–d), Athenaeus affirms that unlike Homer — who, despite his poetical geniality, occasionally composed imperfect hexameters — many subsequent authors (including Xenophanes) carefully wrote their verses paying attention not to produce these 'flawed' hexameters. For the 'imperfect' hexameters of Homer, cf. Untersteiner (1956, 33).

[49] Cf. Untersteiner (1956, CXXVI–VII n. 32).

[50] Another fragment with a probable alternation of *iamboi* and hexameters might be fr. dub. 45. In the way it is reported by its sources, the fragment is metrically unacceptable: scholars have emended the fragment as being composed by a iambic verse followed by a probable hexameter. Another potential

One of the most interesting examples of this kind of metrical mixture is attested in the so-called Nestor's cup, a well-known vase which displays an inscription that probably represents one of the first literary allusions in antiquity.[51] The humorous inscription carved on the vase corroborates the hypothesis of the diffusion of epic parody also at a popular level, suggesting that amateurs were able to compose parodic lines and to reuse the Homeric language themselves.[52] The inscription, written backwards on a side of the cup and in the Euboean alphabet, presumably dates to the end of the eight century BC, thus representing one of the oldest pieces of evidence for alphabetic writing, as well as the oldest Greek poetic fragment:[53]

> Νέστορος [εἰμ]ί εὔποτ[ον] ποτήριον·
> ὃς δ' ἃ<ν> τοῦδε π[ίη]σι ποτηρί[ου], αὐτίκα κεῖνον
> ἵμερ[ος αἱρ]ήσει καλλιστε[φά]νου Ἀφροδίτης
>
> Nestor's cup I am, good to drink from.
> Whoever drinks from this cup, him straightaway
> the desire of beautiful-crowned Aphrodite will seize (transl. is mine)

fragment with the same metrical structure is A14 (*ap.* Arist. *Rh*. 1377a19–21), which has been interpreted in different ways from the metrical point of view (cf. Untersteiner 1956, 24).

[51] The dating of the cup is still discussed, but today most scholars date it to the period between 740 and 725 BC (*pace e.g.* Carpenter 1963, who dates it to the period 550–525 BC). Nestor's cup is roughly contemporary with the Dipylon *oinochoe* (*IG* I^2 919), which dates to the late eighth century BC and similarly reports hexametric verses (cf. *e.g.* Sider 2010, 549 n. 31). Nestor's cup was found in the rich grave 168 of the necropolis of San Montano in Lacco Ameno, on the island of Ischia (Italy), by the archeologists G. Buchner and C.F. Russo in 1954, and was published for the first time in 1955. Today, it is conserved in the Museo Archeologico of Ischia. The vase is a small *kotyle* (around 10 cm in diameter) with geometrical decorations. Most scholars believe that it was imported to the Greek colony of Pithekoussai (the modern island of Ischia) from Rhodes, together with other vases containing precious unguents. The cup, one of the precious grave goods belonging to a boy around ten/fourteen-years old, was perhaps produced in Rhodes around 740–720 BC and inscribed either in Euboea or in Pithekoussai (cf. *e.g.* Jeffery 1961, 235–6). The bibliography on the vase is copious: cf. *e.g.* Gaunt (2016, 94 n. 7). The bibliography on Nestor's Cup is copious: cf. *e.g.* Buchner and Ridgway (1993, esp. 745–50), Panagiotis (2014). Further dactylic inscriptions on pottery are reported, for instance, on a mid-fifth-century Athenian *hydria* (*ARV* 1060), which (probably) contains a hexametric verse: cf. Sider (2010, 574, n. 17). As noticed by Beazley (1948), a *lekythos* from the Seyrig collection, Paris (*ARV* 452) displays an inscription corresponding to the incipit of a *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* (18, 1) Ἑρμῆ<ν> ἀείδω. For further evidence, cf. *e.g.* Jeffery (1990), Lowenstam (1997), Snodgrass (2000), Sider (2010, 549 nn. 31 and 33).

[52] Unless the text of the inscription is a quotation rather than a composition by one of the symposiasts, as it is usually argued: this hypothesis, however, sounds unlikely. At any rate, if the cup was employed in sympotic contexts (as is generally claimed by scholars), it constitutes archaeological evidence for one of the settings in which archaic forms of epic parody could be performed.

[53] Given the fragmentary nature of the inscription, scholars have proposed many textual integrations. While the *lacunae* in the second and third verse are easy to restore, the first verse is still discussed: I have reported here the integration proposed by Jeffery (1961, 235–6). At any rate, the *verbatim* content of the text is ultimately of secondary importance, as long as we assume that the inscription has some humorous and allusive content.

The inscription constitutes a very old (if not the oldest) example of epic parody, since most scholars agree that it is a humorous, playful allusion to the lavish legendary cup of Nestor described in the *Iliad*.[54] The humour of the cup is based, on the one hand, on the incongruity between the epic language of the inscription and its frivolous erotic content and, on the other hand, on the contrast between the low quality of the vase itself and the sumptuousness of the literary cup of Nestor.[55] The metrics of the inscription is also very interesting: as a matter of fact, the text on the cup consists of a couplet in dactylic hexameters preceded by a verse whose exact metre is still a matter of debate.[56] So far, three hypotheses have been proposed. According to the first, the opening verse would be a 'rough trimeter'; according to the second, it would be a trochaic catalectic trimeter; according to the third, it would be a combination of two different parts as a result of a sympotic improvisation.[57] In the light of the playful tone of the cup and of the examples of metrical mixture in parodic poems previously listed, a fascinating hypothesis would be that of considering the first verse of the cup as a mixture of a dactylic beginning (- ⏑ ⏑ - ⏑) followed by a catalectic trochaic dimeter or by the second part of a iambic trimeter after a pentemimere (- ⏑ - ⏑ - ⏑ -).

4.4 Conclusions

In this section, I have tried to underline the importance of the hexametric metre in the definition of ancient *parōidia* and the custom of ancient parodists to play with metres

[54] *Il.* 11.631–7 ἠδὲ μέλι χλωρόν, παρὰ δ' ἀλφίτου ἱεροῦ ἀκτήν, | πὰρ δὲ δέπας περικαλλές, ὃ οἴκοθεν ἦγ' ὁ γεραιός, | χρυσείοις ἥλοισι πεπαρμένον: οὔατα δ' αὐτοῦ | τέσσαρ' ἔσαν, δοιαὶ δὲ πελειάδες ἀμφὶς ἕκαστον | χρύσειαι νεμέθοντο, δύω δ' ὑπὸ πυθμένες ἦσαν. | ἄλλος μὲν μογέων ἀποκινήσασκε τραπέζης | πλεῖον ἐών, Νέστωρ δ' ὁ γέρων ἀμογητὶ ἄειρεν. This hypothesis was first formulated by Buchner (1955) and has been fiercely opposed by some scholars who do not recognise any connection between the two texts (cf. *e.g.* Page 1956, 95 n. 2).

[55] Cf. *e.g.* Picard (1957, 83) and Glei (1992, 47).

[56] As correctly summarised by Gaunt (2016, 97), 'while the words are certainly not hexametric like those in the following two lines, they nonetheless have a pleasant lilt to them and were surely intended to evoke something metrical'. The diphthong ευ at the beginning of the second hemistich can be considered either as a long (the second strike of the iambus) or, in a very epic-like way, as a double short with dieresis. If so, the shift from the dactylic to the iambic metre would display the metrical technique called 'prolongation'. The syllables εἰμὶ ἐϋ would then be at the same time a dactyl in an hexametric sequence and a triple short in the solution of a iambic trimeter.

[57] The hypotheses have been made respectively by Page (1956, 96), Guarducci (1961) and Gaunt (2016, 97 n. 16).

and their axiological value. First, I have underlined the comic value that the use of dactylic metres in classical and earlier epic parody entailed, demonstrating how, through the description of 'low' subjects in the stereotypical metre of the most solemn genre of antiquity, namely epic poetry, Greek parodists were able to trigger humorous results based on the mechanism of incongruence. In the second part, I have collected some relevant evidence on the mixture of iambic and dactylic metres in texts that display some relationship with epic parody.

Chapter 5
Parody and Criticism

5.1 Introduction

Several studies have correctly stressed that the relation between parody and its model is always ambivalent.[1] While some scholars have underlined the element of *criticism* that inherently characterises parody, others have stressed the (implicit) celebration of the model that it entails: naturally directed against esteemed models, parody implicitly acknowledges the prominence of its target.[2] This point has clearly been exposed by Bakhtin in his investigation of Renaissance and Medieval parody. According to him, through the heuristic value of laughter, parody is able to grant an alternative perspective on reality which complements rather than substitutes the tragic one expressed by serious genres such as epic, thus ultimately fostering the persistence of the literary status quo.[3] It is not by chance, then, that some scholars have likened parody to a dialectic mechanism: parody simultaneously attacks and celebrates the model in a thesis-antithesis-synthesis dialectical process that leads to the creation of a new perspective on the model and fosters a dialectic between parody and its target.[4] The ambivalent nature of parody clarifies why it cannot be considered aprioristically a conservative or a revolutionary practice on a theoretical basis: in fact, the parodist's attitude depends on many factors and must be evaluated each time according to the situation.[5] Despite this constructive side, parody is undoubtedly characterised by a disruptive spirit, which scholars have adeguately divided into two kinds: on the one

[1] This position on the double character of parody is attested already in Quintilian (*Inst*. 9.2.35). A good explanation on this point is offered *e.g.* by Rose (1979, 28–33; 2001, 45–7).
[2] This happens *regardless* of the intention of the parodist, which can be either critical or respectful.
[3] Bakhtin correctly states that, in Greece, this is proved also by the fact that each serious genre was associated with a comic *alter ego* that was perceived as its counterpart: tragedy and satyr drama are probably the most representative example of this dualism. The considerations of Bakhtin on this topic appear also in his studies of the connection between Carnival and parody: just as Carnival does not aim at the actual subversion of the status quo, parody is not meant to replace its model, but only to foster its critical interpretation.
[4] Cf. *e.g.* Abastado (1976, 34) and Bonafin (2001, 33–6).
[5] Cf. *e.g.* Karrer (1977, 33), Rose (1979, 149) and Billi (1993, 40–4). As pointed out *e.g.* by Dentith (2000, 27), parody can take on a conservative role when it ridicules what is formally innovative, thus 'protecting' the status quo from innovation.

hand, parody may target its model by criticising some of its formal features and/or the values it carries.[6] On the other hand, the object of parodic criticism may not be the model of parody, but an external element.[7] While the former involves a direct criticism of the model — *i.e.* the target is the *purpose* of parody —, the latter exploits the model only as a tool to criticise another element — *i.e.* the target is a *means*. In this chapter, which is divided into two parts, I will demonstrate that this 'double criticism' plausibly characterised also Greek *parōidia*.[8] I will begin by showing that epic parody may have reflected a poetical 'reaction' against the repetitiveness and the outdateness of epic, a genre which underwent only minor reshapings from the perspective of structure and content. I will also analyse the elements which suggest that classical *parōidia* exploited the great popularity of epic to target contemporary people, categories and behaviours.

5.2 The criticism *of* epic

As I have outlined in the introduction, the first section of this chapter is devoted to the analysis of the disparagement of epic carried out in classical epic parody. I will start by saying, however, that in this section I will not consider the poems of classical *parōidia* directly and that therefore my analysis will not be forcibly based on primary evidence. In other words, a close reading of the surviving examples of epic parody alone is not sufficient to gather conclusive clues on this field of enquiry: in fact, without the explicit testimony provided by those authors — like Athenaeus — who cite the fragments, we are not able to judge whether the comic reworkings of epic

[6] Cf. *e.g.* Bonafin (2001, 33–4), who has correctly emphasised that, despite its objectively ambivalent nature, parody is in practice more frequently characterised by a derisive and critical charge. Parodic criticism has a multifaceted nature: it can be ideological, stylistic, political, etc.

[7] Cf. *e.g.* Donà (1985, 164) and Hutcheon (1985, 84). This dual nature of parodic criticism had already been noticed by Tynjanov, who called these two sides of parody 'parodicity' (*parodičnost'*) and 'parodisticity' (*parodijnost'*).

[8] Cf. Rose (1979), who has correctly underlined that the modification of the hypotext ultimately leads to its consolidation through a process of re-functionalisation. This can be explained by the fact that parody, playing on the latent intertextuality, does not explicitly celebrates its model but usually lets its audience do it. It is possible to apply also the distinctions between 'serious' and 'trivial' parody formulated by Freund (1967) to the analysis of Greek epic parody. While, in some parodies, the criticism of epic seems to aim at 'widening' the artistic horizons of epic poetry through the criticism against its repetitive clichés (such as I will show in the poems of Xenophanes), in other poems the criticism seems to be devoted 'only' to comic purposes without further motives (such as, for instance, the parodies of Hipponax). On this basis, one may argue that, from a speculative and theoretical standpoint, that Greek epic parody (directly and indirectly) contributed to the evolution of the epic genre.

attested in the poems of classical *parōidia* represent a direct attack against their model. Even so, the consideration of the crucial theories on parody devised by the Russian formalists and by Bakhtin corroborates the idea that an inherent criticism of its model was present also in classical *parōidia*: indeed, despite being principally based on the investigation of parody in *modern* literature, these theories provide valuable interpretative keys that can be used to appreciate this aspect in classical *parōidia*. The first part of this section, therefore, will introduce the theoretical framework on which I will base the analysis of the classical sources that I will carry out in the second part. The studies that I will take into consideration are those on the role that parodic criticism holds in literary evolution, formulated by three Russian formalists (Tynjanov, Šklovskij, Tomaševskij), and those on parodic dialogism — a process which explains on a deeper level the machanism that leads parody to the disruption of its model — written by Bakhtin. Starting from these reflections, I will subsequently inspect some poems by Archilochus and Xenophanes which are characterised by the explicit comic disparagement of epic: in my view, the existence of a strand of archaic humorous criticism of epic strongly suggests that classical epic parody perpetuated this earlier tradition.

5.2.1 Parodic criticism and literary evolution

In their ground-breaking studies, Russian formalists have pointed out that parody plays a fundamental role in literary evolution: through its inherently disruptive attitude, parody critically discloses the stereotypical elements of its model and fosters literary 'filiation'.[9] According to Tynjanov (1968; 1971), literary evolution proceeds from the unceasing contrast between different literary works and genres. This contrast intrinsically involves the destruction of an old paradigm in favour of a new one, which carries on only some of the elements which belonged to previous paradigm through a mechanism of 'stylisation', *i.e* the overabundant repetition of distinguishing clichés.

[9] Because of their deep attention to the notion of *literaturnost* (*i.e.* the 'literarity' of literature), the theories of the Russian formalists represented a crucial step in the evolution of theories on parody. Cf. *e.g.* Eikhenbaum (1965) and Todorov (1968). Their attention to parody derives from their interest in intertextuality as an intrinsic element of literature: every literary object, in their view, finds its own definition in its relationship with other works.

In Tynjanov's view, this 'stylisation' becomes parody when it creates a comic gap between the model and its new elaboration through a linguistic process that he calls 'mechanisation'.[10] Tynjanov argues that parody occurs when some stylistic traits are perceived as too stereotypical of a specific genre and thus ultimately devoid of any artistic value: in its humorous criticism of these clichéd traits, parody produces an artistic renewal which is ultimately crucial for literary evolution. Likewise, Šklovskij (1965) affirms that, even if many different literary schools coexist in any given historical period, only one represents the canonised summit of its age; the others, by contrast, survive on the back foot without a formal canonisation. Nevertheless, he argues that these 'secondary' schools cyclically produce new artistic forms that gradually substitute the mainstream tradition and eventually become the new aesthetic paradigm.[11] In this scenario, parody works as a catalyst of the decadence of a dominant genre through the disclosure of its intrinsic features which have become, once again, too conventional and, therefore, devoid of any artistic value: in short, parody substantially represents the tangible actualisation of literary evolution. Similar reflections are formulated by Tomaševskij (1968), who describes parody in terms of 'canonisation'. In his view, every artistic school produces and makes use of specific features that eventually become stereotypical and constitute the 'stylistic canon' of the school itself. As soon as they become stereotyped (and, as a consequence, outdated), these features are cyclically replaced by innovative features of new schools. Tomaševskij highlights also the important concept of the 'perceptibility' of literary features: the audience only perceives a specific literary form either when it is incredibly stereotypical or when it is exceptionally innovative and/or unexpected in a given historical and cultural context. While some authors aim to hide such features and their perceptibility, thus trying to dissimulate the presence of the author and of his/her style behind the work, others prefer to make them explicit through their intensification. In this theoretical context, parody embodies a critical and comic unmasking of the stereotypes of a specific school through the limpid externalisation of

[10] Tynjanov (1971, 67–8) makes the example of archaisms, whose function depends on their context: while they perfectly fit in solemn genres such as epics and tragedy, they are often employed in parody for humorous purposes.
[11] Cf. also Tomaševskij (1968, 346–9) and Bakhtin (1984, 106) for the idea of the continual, unceasing renewal of literary genres.

its features. The way in which parody triggers the disruption of its model has been more thoroughly explained by Bakhtin in his studies of the dialogic value of parody.[12] His analysis of parodic dialogism involves a semiotic view that can be summarised in the expression 'double reference', as parody refers not only to the words of the model, but also to its 'world'.[13] Bakhtin argues that parody is a 'double text' characterised by a peculiar process of hybridisation: while marking its distance from the model, parody *incorporates* its 'vision of reality' and, by doing so, shows its inherent unilaterality.[14] By applying this dialogic interpretation to the sphere of genres, Bakhtin argues that every literary genre is characterised by a set of semiotic tools used to filter reality into a distinctive literary form. By playing with these tools, parody unmasks their formal and ideological unilaterality, thus undermining the alleged authority of the dominant styles. Thanks to its autonomy from the canonical system of genres and artistic clichés, parody unmasks the artificiality of its model by showing how reality is always richer, more contradictory and diverse than it usually seems when it is circumscribed within the rigid frames of a specific genre. As a consequence, the disclosure of the features of the model triggers its literary and conceptual disavowal, as it is regarded as no longer able to offer an encompassing perspective on reality.

5.2.2 Criticism of epic: the earliest occurrences

In the previous part of this section, I have showed that the Russian formalists unanimously underlined the 'double role' played by parody in the evolution of literature. In conclusion, it is possible to affirm, on the one hand, that parody 'passively' represents the litmus test of the saturation of a literary genre, as it embodies the result of its progressive, cyclical decadence, and, on the other hand, that parody

[12] Bakhtin (1968; 1984). This is a point which has been at the centre of his studies of the dynamic and relational aspects of human language. Cf. *e.g.* Bonafin (2001, 41–54) for an analysis of parodic dialogism and a distinction between the notions of dialogism and intertextuality.
[13] Cf. Rose (1979, 107) and Bonafin (1997, 30–1; 2001, 43–4).
[14] This only takes place at a purely formal level, as it does not represent a synthesis of the intrinsic, original value of the two texts: Sinicropi (1981, 244) has highlighted that parody subverts the elements of the model and destabilises its associated meanings; in other words, parody encompasses a given text but, at the same time, underlines its own divergence from it. This process has been even described in terms of bilingualism rather than mimesis: cf. Golopentia-Erescu (1969, 171) and Hutcheon (1978a, 469).

plays an 'active' role in accelerating the evolution of literature by debunking the repetitiveness, the outdateness and the fictionality of its model.[15] In addition, I have described the inner mechanism of parody that, according to Bakhtin, leads to the conceptual disruption of its models. If one applies — on a purely theoretical basis — the abovementioned theories to the genre of classical *parōidia*, it is possible to conclude that it may have similarly represented the tangible result of the saturation of the epic tradition, playing at the same time a relevant part in the criticism of epic model. This hypothesis seems to be supported by the analysis of some archaic poems, in which we find a playful reworking of epic clichés, whose aim is criticising the outdateness of epic values and themes, as well as the formal repetitiveness of its style. Even though this opinion is based on theoretical considerations, it is plausible that the same critical spirit would have characterised also the poems of classical *parōidia*.[16]

In some poems by Archilochus we find an explicit rejection of epic principles, *i.e.* values ingrained in epic poems. This refusal of the heroic *ethos*, often conveyed through epic allusions and references, contributes to the general understanding of the cultural and literary context of epic parody by proving that the epic poems could be the object of a critical attitude that might have ultimately led to their playful reworking.[17] Fr. 5, for instance, takes a sarcastic, nonchalant and dismissive attitude towards the Homeric value according to which one's honour is to be defended at all costs:

> ἀσπίδι μὲν Σαΐων τις ἀγάλλεται, ἣν παρὰ θάμνωι,
> ἔντος ἀμώμητον, κάλλιπον οὐκ ἐθέλων·
> αὐτὸν δ' ἐξεσάωσα. τί μοι μέλει ἀσπὶς ἐκείνη;
> ἐρρέτω· ἐξαῦτις κτήσομαι οὐ κακίω.
>
> Some Saian exults in my shield which I left—a faultless weapon—

[15] Obviously, these are two sides of the same coin. Whenever it emerges, parody automatically triggers the critical mechanism.

[16] Scholars have already pointed out that the criticism of epic poems dates back to the archaic period and continues in the classical age: cf. *e.g.* Heraclitus (*e.g.* frr. 42 and 56 DK), Xenophanes (cf. *infra* ch. 5) and Plato (Pl. *R.* 595a–608b10). The Homeric criticism of both authors has been extensively investigated by scholarship: cf. *e.g.* Murray (1996). This criticism of epic can linked to the textual criticism of the Homeric poems, which started already in archaic time and whose birth indirectly proves that the epic poems were no longer perceived only as *sacred*, untouchable poems, but as *normal* poems in need of a philological analysis.

[17] The point here is not whether Archilochus actually agreed with this criticism, but rather that he could choose to ridiculise epic background. This is often achieved through the reuse of Homeric expressions.

beside a bush against my will.
But I saved myself. What do I care about that shield?
To hell with it! I'll get one that's just as good another time.

By discarding the epic principle of military honour — here encapsulated in the shield — in favour of his personal safety, Archilochus seems to suggest that life is ultimately more important than glory: a perspective that starkly contrasts with the most common behaviour of epic heroes.[18] The denial of epic principles, in this fragment, is achieved through the parodic reinterpretation of epic models.[19] First, the Saian boasts about the stolen shield without having killed his enemy: as some scholars have suggested, this element represents a comic incongruence with the epic model.[20] Second, the feeling that Archilochus does not conform to epic heroic standards is emphasised by his apparent comparison between himself and Hector running before Achilles in *Il.* 22.136–8.[21] Likewise, in the tetrameters of fr. 114, we find a witty description of a narcissistic general who is negatively compared with an ugly but fiery one:

οὐ φιλέω μέγαν στρατηγὸν οὐδὲ διαπεπλιγμένον
οὐδὲ βοστρύχοισι γαῦρον οὐδ' ὑπεξυρημένον,
ἀλλά μοι σμικρός τις εἴη καὶ περὶ κνήμας ἰδεῖν

[18] Cf. *e.g.* Adrados (1956, 32 n. 1), Gerber (1970, 15) and Nicolosi (2013, 69–71). I say 'most common' because in *Iliad* 9 Achilles, by deciding to leave the Achaean's expedition, seems to imply that life is ultimately more important than glory. Still, it is undeniable that in the epic poems the fulfilling of military duties (which may inevitably lead to death) is a central element in the definition of heroic identity. The reference to the shield is based on the sentence that the Spartan women used to say to their sons when they were heading off to war, *i.e.* ἢ τὰν ἢ ἐπὶ τᾶς ('either this or upon this', cf. *e.g.* Carm.Pop. *PMG* 856). For some criticism to this interpretation cf. Gallavotti (1949, 136), Kirkwood (1974, 32–3), Seidensticker (1978, 5–10). One may argue that Archilochus is suggesting that, faced with the chance of probable death, it is better to live and fight to gain glory another day: it seems to me, however, that such interpretation contrasts with predominant and stereotypical thoughts of the heroes, who do not overthink about their actions. Moreover, the source of the fragment (Plut. *Instit. Lac.* 34.239b) does not support this interpretation: Plutarch reports that 'when the poet Archilochus arrived in Sparta, they drove him out at once, because they learned that in his poetry he had said that it was better to throw away one's arms than to be killed': Plutarch's or the Spartans' interpretation of Archilochus' poem may be incorrect, but I believe that such interpretation was the most straightforward also in ancient times. The fragment is recalled in Anacr. *PMG* 381b, where the *rhipsaspia* seems to be ironically 'ennobled' by the epic *iunctura* ποταμοῦ καλλιρόου (cf. *e.g. Od.* 5.441).

[19] The fragment shows also some reuses of Homeric language: cf. *e.g.* the adjective ἀμώμητον ('faultless'), which in epic poems is referred to heroes (cf. Gerber 1970, 16) and the expression οὐκ ἐθέλων ('against my will'), which is employed in a military context in *Il.* 4.300. Cf. also Swift (2019, 212–15).

[20] Cf. *e.g.* Corrêa (1998, 126). Cf. also *Il.* 17.472–3, where Hector brags about the weapons of Achilles after he has stolen them from Patroclus.

[21] Cf. *e.g.* Gallavotti (1949, 137) and Nicolosi (2013, 67), who recalls the similar overturning of the epic, heroic *ethos* which occurs in fr. 2.

ῥοικός, ἀσφαλέως βεβηκὼς ποσσί, καρδίης πλέως.

I have no liking for a general who is tall, walks with a swaggering gait,
takes pride in his curls, and is partly shaven.
Let mine be one who is short, has a bent look about the shins,
stands firmly on his feet, and is full of courage.

Through the description of the general, Archilochus discards the conventional heroic depiction of epic heroes through his preference for an unpretentious but courageous and skilled general.[22] The ironic description of the general is focused on the conventional features of the epic heroes, namely their long hair and their strong legs.[23]

The most interesting case of the criticism of epic, however, is attested in Xenophanes: his poems prove that, already in the archaic period, the outdateness and the repetitiveness of epic were criticised and that the epic language was employed to mock its own clichés. The evidence seems to prove that strong criticism of epic permeated his whole poetry and its various performative scenarios. It is well known, after all, that a relevant part of the production of Xenophanes was devoted to the criticism of epic: in particular, he censured the anthropomorphic representations of the gods and the outdatedness of epic subjects.[24] Although this criticism of the epic values does not automatically lead to the composition of epic parodies, still it suggests that in the sixth century BC the rhapsodic tradition could be the object of a disrespectful spirit that may have contributed to Xenophanes' parodic verve. Moreover, this element cannot be overlooked in light of the fact that Xenophanes allegedly composed parodies and — as I have showed in the previous chapter — employed peculiar metrical techniques attested mostly in the forerunners of parodic poetry. Several sources testify to Xenophanes's caustic attitude. Diogenes Laertius (9.18–20), for instance, reports

[22] Cf. *e.g.* Snell (1955, 95) and Swift (2019, 295–7). The denial of epic values and *ethos* — which similarly seems to occur in other fragments (cf. *e.g.* fr. 5) — has been questioned by some scholars such as Page (1963, 159), Gerber (1970, 27) and Toohey (1986).

[23] The focus on the hair and the legs as stereotypically 'heroic' parts of the body will reappear in the fragments of epic parody. Scholars have spotted some ironic dismissal of epic values and principles also in frr. 19 ad 133: cf. *e.g.* Lasserre and Bonnard (1968, 7), Vox (1988) for the former and Gerber (1970, 28), Russello (1993, 216–17) for the latter.

[24] Cf. Untersteiner (1956, CXIX–CXXXIII) for Xenophanes' criticism of divine anthropomorphism. Additional passages on the ancient criticism to Homer are listed *e.g.* in Feeney (1991, 5–56) and Solaro (2011). The anthropomorphic representation of the gods is criticised also in frr. 14, 15 and 16. Important considerations on the Xenophanes' criticism, focused on his reinterpretation of divine disclosure, are formulated by Tor (2017).

that the sceptic philosopher Timon of Phlius (fr. 60 Di Marco) celebrated Xenophanes with the word Ὁμηραπάτης ('perverter of Homer') for his verses against Homer and Hesiod:[25]

> γέγραφε δὲ ἐν ἔπεσι καὶ ἐλεγείας καὶ ἰάμβους καθ' Ἡσιόδου καὶ Ὁμήρου, ἐπικόπτων αὐτῶν τὰ περὶ θεῶν εἰρημένα. ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτὸς ἐρραψώδει τὰ ἑαυτοῦ.
>
> He [Xenophanes] wrote in both elegiac and iambic verse against Hesiod and Homer, criticising the things they say about the gods. But he also recited his own works.

The same critical attitude is attested in two other fragments (frr. 11–12), in which Xenophanes attacks Homer and Hesiod for their anthropomorphic depiction of the gods, whom they portray with human flaws that do not match their divine nature:

> πάντα θεοῖσ' ἀνέθηκαν Ὅμηρός θ' Ἡσίοδός τε,
> ὅσσα παρ' ἀνθρώποισιν ὀνείδεα καὶ ψόγος ἐστίν,
> κλέπτειν μοιχεύειν τε καὶ ἀλλήλους ἀπατεύειν.
>
> Homer and Hesiod have attributed to the gods
> All sorts of things which are matters of reproach and censure among men:
> Theft, adultery, and mutual deceit.
>
> ὡς πλεῖστ(α) ἐφθέγξαντο θεῶν ἀθεμίστια ἔργα,
> κλέπτειν μοιχεύειν τε καὶ ἀλλήλους ἀπατεύειν.
>
> … as they sang numerous illicit divine deeds:
> theft, adultery, and mutual deceit.

Xenophanes' criticism, however, does not concern only the portrayals of the gods by Homer and Hesiod, but also — on a more general perspective — the subjects of the Greek epic tradition.[26] In one of his elegiac fragments (fr. 1. 19–23), Xenophanes

[25] The interpretation of the passage is still discussed, and καθ' Ἡσιόδου καὶ Ὁμήρου might refer either to the whole expression 'ἐν ἔπεσι καὶ ἐλεγείας καὶ ἰάμβους' or only to a part of it ('καὶ ἐλεγείας καὶ ἰάμβους' or 'ἰάμβους'). Xenophanes' elegies displayed a humorous, satiric overtone and were probably closely connected with the collection of poems called *Silloi*. The correct meaning of the term *iamboi* in the passage is discussed, as it might refer either to the specific meter of *iambos* (more probably) or, more generically, to a 'critical spirit'.

[26] This suggests, once again, that the model of epic parody was the whole of the rhapsodic tradition.

condemns the outdateness and the repetitiveness of traditional rhapsodic topics such as the *Gigantomachy* and the *Titanomachy,* described as useless 'fictions of the old':[27]

> ἀνδρῶν δ' αἰνεῖν τοῦτον ὃς ἐσθλὰ πιὼν ἀναφαίνει,
> ὥς οἱ μνημοσύνη καὶ τόνος ἀμφ' ἀρετῆς,
> οὔτι μάχας διέπων Τιτήνων οὐδὲ Γιγάντων
> οὐδέ <τε> Κενταύρων, πλάσματα τῶν προτέρων,
> ἢ στάσιας σφεδανάς, τοῖσ' οὐδὲν χρηστὸν ἔνεστι·
>
> Praise the man who when he has taken drink brings noble deeds to light,
> As memory and a striving for virtue bring to him.
> He deals neither with the battles of Titans nor Giants
> Nor Centaurs, fiction of old,
> Nor furious conflicts — for there is no use in these.

In conclusion, despite the lack of direct sources on the criticism of epic in the genre of classical epic parody, the theories formulated by the Russian formalists and by Bakhtin, together with the analysis of some poems by Archilochus and Xenophanes, suggest that the playful re-elaborations of epic reflected, since the archaic period, the saturation of the genre and contributed to its criticism. In all likelihood, this process characterised also the genre of epic parody in the classical period. Through the comic reworking of epic, classical *parōidia* may have embodied and actively contributed to the ongoing criticism of the repetiviness and the outdateness of epic clichés.

5.3 Criticism *through* epic

As I have stated in the introduction to this chapter, parody is frequently employed also as a 'tool' for the criticism of external elements. This is an aspect that strongly characterises parody from a theoretical and historical perspective. In all times and

[27] Cf. Untersteiner (1956, 106–7) for a longer analysis of the passage. In Xenophanes' view, ancient topics are useless as they do not contribute to the education of 'good citizen'. The fragment closely recalls Anacr. fr. 56 G (= fr. eleg. 2 W), in which epic language and expressions are (perhaps ironically) employed to criticise exactly those same topics (namely epic subjects) they are meant to describe. In this fragment, Anacreon expresses his preference for a lighter song with erotic content (οὐ φιλέω ὃς κρητῆρι παρὰ πλέῳ οἰνοποτάζων | νείκεα καὶ πόλεμον δακρυόεντα λέγει, | ἀλλ' ὅστις Μουσέων τε καὶ ἁγλαὰ δῶρ' Ἀφροδίτης | συμμίσγων ἐρατῆς μνήσκεται εὐφροσύνης, 'I do not like the man who while drinking his wine beside the full mixing-bowl talks of strife and tearful war: I like him who by mingling the splendid gifts of the Muses and Aphrodite remembers the loveliness of the feast'): cf. Leo (2015, 157–63).

places, parody has always been used to criticise contemporary people and/or categories, thus playing an important (though often underestimated) role in the development of political ideas and cultural habits. The reason why parody is exploited so much by poets for their criticism depends on the fact that parody, more than other genres, is able to create a 'connection' between the parodists and their audience, thus triggering a 'conceptual superimposition' between the two. This mechanism is based on two elements. First, through the humorous allusion to these models and the impulse to laugh at the expense of the target of their criticism, parodists are able to create a latent connection with their audience. Second, from a pragmatic perspective — as I have shown in the previous chapter —, parody always requires an active role both on the part of the parodists and on that the audience, whom is asked to decode the parody by understanding the humorous connection between the parody itself and its model. By playing on the connection triggered by the parodic mechanism, parodists often implicitly 'gain' the approval of their audience and are therefore able to curry its favour more easily than the authors of other genres.

5.3.1 Epic parody and social criticism

Examining the instances of Greek *parōidia*, it is possible to notice that it was commonly used to criticise contemporary individuals and professional categories. This is not surprising: classical *parōidia* was a popular theatrical genre with its own performative settings; just like other contemporary genres (such as tragedy and comedy), it is likely that *parōidia* had a social and political purpose too and it is also not a coincidence that the criticism attested in parodic poems is addressed to the same categories which are targeted in contemporary and earlier works. More specifically, in the poem of Hegemon we find explicit criticism of the category of rhapsodes.[28] This is made clear in v. 9, where the narrator deplores the fact that his comrades perform poorly in this role.[29]

[28] This may not be a coincidence. If we accept the hypotesis that I have expressed in the previous section of this chapter, *i.e.* that epic parody involved criticism of epic, it is likely that this criticism was reflected on its performers, considered 'guilty' of carrying forward an outdated poetical tradition.
[29] In addition, despite their poor artistic abilities, both the protagonist and his companions have turned to rhapsody just as an expedient to survive poverty: indeed, in vv. 6–8, we find out that the real motive that has prompted them to play rhapsodies is money.

"μνῆ μ᾽ ἀνέπεισε γέροντα καὶ οὐκ ἐθέλοντ᾽ ἀναβῆναι
καὶ σπάνις, ἣ πολλοὺς Θασίων εἰς ὁλκάδα βάλλει
εὐκούρων βδελυρῶν, ὀλλύντων τ᾽ ὀλλυμένων τε
ἀνδρῶν, **οἳ νῦν κεῖθι κακῶς κακὰ ῥαψῳδοῦσιν**·
οἷς καὶ ἐγὼ σιτοῖο μέγα χρηΐζων ἐπίθησα

"A mina of silver convinced me, old and unwilling though I am, to go up,
along with my poverty, which drives many Thasians into cargo-ships,
well-barbered wretches, destroying and destroyed,
who now do a bad job of performing bad songs there;
this is what convinced me, in my desperate need for food"

The criticism of rhapsodes as a category — which dates back at least to Xenophanes and Heraclitus — is not an isolated phenomenon in the fifth century BC and is mostly based on their alleged greed.[30] In fact, rhapsodic practice had already largely lost its original elevated 'artistic' status in the fifth century BC and it had eventually become an everyday job upon which many people (including some incompetent amateurs, as those described in this fragment) resorted to simply in order to make ends meet.[31] Hegemon criticises the rhapsodes by focusing on their greed, which is summarised by in the term κέρδος ('profit', v. 11), a negatively nuanced word which describes the real motive which has induced the protagonist and his 'companions' to undertake the career of rhapsodes.[32] This condemnation of rhapsodes suggests that Hegemon shared in the form of social criticism which was widespread in the Athens of his times. Indeed, similar criticism appears in nearly 'contemporary' sources, such as Plato's *Ion* (535d–e), where Socrates makes fun of Ion, a pretentious (fictional) rhapsode, who in turn reveals the true, avaricious nature of his professional category. Likewise, in a passage from Xenophon's *Symposium* (3.6.4–5), one of the guests brags about his ability to

[30] Some scholars (cf. *e.g.* most recently Panomitros 2003, 157–8) have even suggested *ad personam* allusions to contemporary rhapsodes such as Stesimbrotus and Hippias of Thasos; however, it is probably safer to assume that Hegemon is referring to the general category of rhapsodes rather than to specific performers.

[31] This shift from a highly qualified status to a humbler one surely contributed to (and was itself provoked by) the 'de-sacralisation' of epic, which in turn must have fostered the 'social acceptance' of its humorous re-elaboration.

[32] The first occurrence of the term in relation to profit specifically obtained through seatrade appears in *Od*. 8.161–4, in a section where Euryalus defames Odysseus. For the word κέρδος ('profit'), cf. *e.g.* Bravo (1977, 33–5), Mele (1979, 80–1) and Cozzo (1988).

memorise both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, and this statement triggers a conversation on rhapsodic practice. Like Ion in Plato's dialogue, Xenophon abuses the rhapsodic *technē* and condemns the category of rhapsodes by emphasising their greed.

The poem of Matro too seems to display ideological and political criticism.[33] At a first sight, the presence of such criticism in a poem about food may appear surprising. In truth, food and dining styles are topics which involve ideological issues: the quality and the quantity of food and drinks, together with the way and the settings in which they are produced and consumed, are strongly influenced by economic and social parameters which entail political and ideological consequences.[34] Against this background, it has been correctly assumed that the poem of Matro may have gained leverage through the resentment of the popular classes against rich people, depicted in the poem as gluttons whose greedy political attitude is reflected in their rapacious longing for food.[35] This is not unexpected: we know that *opsophagia*, *i.e.* the gluttonous desire for expensive and fancy food, was perceived as a symbol of antidemocratic attitudes in Athens.[36] Although there are no explicit clues that prove the importance of this ideological aspect in the poem, its relevance seems to be suggested by the fact that the banqueters in the poem belong to different social groups: two of them, Xenocles and Stratocles, are historical characters who belonged to the high and wealthy Athenian social class, while Chaerephon is referred to as a professional parasite and the narrator himself implicitly confesses to belonging to a lower class when he affirms that he does not usually have access to such refined cuisine, but that he is rather accostumed to 'cheese and servile bread' (vv. 91–2):

> γευσάμενος δ' ἔκλαιον, ὅτ' αὔριον οὐκ ἔτι ταῦτα
> ὄψομαι, ἀλλά με δεῖ τυρῷ καὶ μάζῃ ὀτρηρῇ
> <>

[33] For political criticism in the poems of Matro's, cf. Olson and Sens (1999, 29–33). Some political criticism may be attested also in Hegemon in the light of the tense relationship between Athens and Thasos in the fifth century BC, but we have not enough evidence to draw further conclusions: cf. Magnani (2014).

[34] Despite the connections between sex and seafood that have been stressed by sholarship: cf. *e.g.* Davidson (1997) and Mastellari (2018), who provides ample bibliography on this topic.

[35] It should be underlined that the social class to which the narrator belongs does not necessarily reflect that of Matro himself. Just like Hegemon, Matro may have been part of a higher social class, but the total lack of sources about his life prevent any certain conclusion on this topic.

[36] In Athenian comedy and rhetoric, politicians are frequently portrayed as gluttons, who antidemocratically claim for themselves more share than they deserve. Cf. *e.g.* Davidson (1993) and Olson and Sens (1999, 29–33, 28–9; 2000, XLVI–LV).

I began to wail when I tasted it, since I would no longer see these things
on the morrow, but on cheese and servile bread would have to
<>.

Against this background, it has been interestingly suggested that the poem may reflect a hidden criticism of the political position of Stratocles and Xenocles.[37] If so, Matro may have exploited the depiction of social issues in order to criticise Athenian politicians. A valuable hint of this ideological attitude seems to be attested, in particular, in two passages of fr. 1 (vv. 50–1, 56–8):[38]

῾Ίρις δ᾽ ἄγγελος ἦλθε ποδήνεμος ὠκέα τευθίς,
πέρκη τ᾽ ἀνθεσίχρως καὶ ὁ δημοτικὸς μελάνουρος

Iris the wind-footed messenger came in, the swift squid,
And the sea-perch with her brightly coloured flesh, and the popular
saddled bream

ῥίνη θ᾽, ἣν φιλέουσι περισσῶς τέκτονες ἄνδρες,
τρηχεῖ᾽, ἀλλ᾽ ἀγαθὴ κουροτρόφος· ἦ γὰρ ἔγωγε
ἧς σαρκὸς δύναμαι γλυκερώτερον ἄλλο ἰδέσθαι.

And the monkfish, of which craftsmen are extraordinarily fond;
it is rough, but good for nourishing young men. I myself
can envision other things more pleasant than its flesh.

In the first passage, the narrator displays a degree of consciousness of his belonging to the popular class when he qualifies the fish called μελάνουρος with the adjective δημοτικός (‘popular’). Even if the term may appear neutrally to highlight the fact that the saddled bream was of a lower quality (and, therefore, more available to ordinary people) than the rest of the fish mentioned, the curious specification may not be accidental and thus disclose some ideological issues: it has been interestingly suggested that in classical Athens the word had strong ideological tones, since it was used to refer to people who were sympathetic to democratic ideals.[39] Likewise, in the

[37] Cf. Olson and Sens (1999, 29–33): the criticism would have been against their political stance in favour of the lavish lifestyle which, according to some sources, Demetrius of Phalerum (likely the main political target of the poem) enjoyed.
[38] Cf. Olson and Sens (1999, 28).
[39] Cf. Olson and Sens (1999, 105).

second passage the poet underlines the popularity of the ῥίνη among craftsmen (probably because of its affordable price); he highlights the roughness of its flesh and expresses his personal preference for this type of fish whose flesh tastes better than that of other species. If these references point to the right direction, they might have been smartly inserted into the list of dishes to subtly stress the distance between the food that was commonly found on the table of rich and poor people respectively, thus indirectly triggering an ideological contrast.

In conclusion, despite the lack of secondary sources on classical *parōidia* which stress the presence of ideological issues, several clues suggest that the genre of classical *parōidia* was strongly influenced by contemporary and earlier critical attitudes that invested some contemporary categories such as that of rhapsodes and politicians: just as parody today, Greek *parōidia* constituted a critical tool for the criticism of contemporary people and costumes.

5.3.2 Earlier and contemporary criticism

The 'external' criticism attested in classical *parōidia* dates back to the archaic stages of Greek literature, as some poems by Archilochus, Hipponax and Anacreon seem to demonstrate. In fr. 117, for instance, Archilochus mocks the excessive attention paid by his friend Glaucus to his own fancy hairstyle:

τὸν κεροπλάστην ἄειδε Γλᾶυκον

Sing of Glaucus, who arranges his hair in horns

To do this, he employs epic language and models. From a linguistic perspective, the verse recalls the Homeric style through the epic verb ἀείδω, which, together with the word order of the verse, explicitly recalls the famous incipit of the *Iliad*.[40] From a thematic perspective, Archilochus mocks Glaucus by capitalising on one of the most

[40] *Il.* 1.1 μῆνιν ἄειδε θεὰ Πηληϊάδεω Ἀχιλῆος | οὐλομένην. Lasserre and Bonnard (1968, 30) have suggested restoring an invocation to the Muse(s) at the end of the verse to make it even more similar to the incipit of the *Iliad*: the hypothesis is very speculative, but, together with the name 'Glaucus' itself (a potential comic allusion of the homonymous Homeric hero), it would enhance the epic tone of the poem.

stereotypical physical features of Homeric heroes, namely their long hair: Glaucus, a vain dandy, is thus ironically compared to the epic heroes. It has been also argued that the fragment might echo, more specifically, *Il.* 11.385, where Diomedes mocks Paris for his affected appearance and his cowardice, calling him κέρᾳ ἀγλαέ ('lovely in your locks'), a formula explained by scholiasts as a comment on his hairstyle.[41] This critical power of parody is exploited to the greatest extent by Hipponax, who employs humorously epic language and clichés for the criticism of its targets in several of his poems. The most symbolic example is fr. 126, where Hipponax berates an otherwise unknown character which is humorously labelled with the pretentious patronymic Eurymedontiades.[42] Another illustrative example is attested in fr. 20, where Hipponax describes by means of epic-sounding formulas the (alleged) incestuous behaviour of Bupalos, one of his rivals:

> τούτοισι θηπέων τοὺς Ἐρυθραίων παῖδας
> ὁ μητροκοίτης Βούπαλος σὺν Ἀρήτῃ
> < x - > ὑφέλξων τὸν δυσώνυμον †ἄρτον†
>
> Bupalus, the mother-fucker with Arete,
> Fooling with these words (by these means?) the Erythraeans,
> Preparing to draw back his damnable foreskin

In the second verse, the hapax μητροκοίτης recalls the Homeric word παρακοίτης ('wife') and describes Bupalos' incestuous tendencies.[43] The solemn phrasing of the fragment, which is assembled out of epic building-blocks, contrasts with the reference in v. 3 to the genitals of Bupalos, qualified by the epic adjective δυσώνυμος ('damnable').[44] Anacreon too, in some of his poems, exploits parody for censorious purposes. In *PMG* 427, the Homeric image of the sea, commonly employed in epic in

[41] Cf. Swift (2019, 302). As I have argued in the second chapter of this thesis, the representation of Paris in the *Iliad* already displays several comic traits that might have been taken up by later parodists.
[42] Cf. *supra* pp. 138–9.
[43] The parodic tone of the poem emerges already in the first verse, where the periphrasis Ἐρυθραίων παῖδας ('Eritrean progenies') is a parody of epic expressions such as *e.g. Il.* 1.162, 6.255 (υἷες Ἀχαιῶν). It must be underlined that the fact of calling someone 'mother-fucker' does not necessarily describe some actual incestuous behaviour, as it may represent only a common form of insult that works by breaking a social taboo. Cf. also Hippon. fr. dub. 193 for the form Μητρότιμος (literally 'honoured by the mother' or 'honouring the mother'); cf. also Degani (1991, 39).
[44] The name itself 'Boupalos', as argued by Rosen (1988, 32), might be a speaking name composed by the terms Βου- ('bull-like) and -παλος (= φαλλός, 'penis').

comparison with serious situations, describes instead the babbling of a wily courtesan named Gastrodora:[45]

> μηδ᾽ ὥστε κῦμα πόντιον
> λάλαζε, τῇ πολυκρότῃ
> σὺν Γαστροδώρῃ καταχύδην
> πίνουσα τὴν ἐπίστιον.
>
> and do not babble like the wave of the sea, swilling down the hearth-cup
> with the wily Gastrodora.

Interestingly, the name of the courtesan seems to be comic too, since it is moulded on similar epic proper names, and an ironic allusion to the Hesiodic Pandora cannot be excluded.[46] Likewise, the first fragment of *PMG* 346 attests an interesting humorous reuse of Homeric compounds aimed at the disparaging of a contemporary prostitute.[47] In the last fragment of the poem, a girl named Herotima is invoked using the adjectival compound λεωφόρε (‘public highway’):[48]

> οὐδε...[.]σ.φ..α..[...]..[
> φοβερὰς δ᾽ ἔχεις πρὸς ἄλλωι
> _φρένας, ὦ καλλιπρό[σ]ωπε παίδ[ων·
> καί σε δοκεῖ μενε[...΄].....[
> πυκινῶς ἔχουσα[5
> _ἀτιτάλλειν· σ[.].[....]...[
> τὰς ὑακιν[θίνας ἀρ]ούρας
> ἵ]να Κύπρις ἐκ λεπάδνων
> _...]΄[.]α[ς κ]ατέδησεν ἵππους·
> .....]δ᾽ ἐν μέσωι κατῆξας 10
> .....]ωι δι᾽ ἄσσα πολλοὶ
> _πο]λ]ιητέων φρένας ἐπτοέαται·
> λεωφ]όρε λεωφόρ᾽ Ἡρο[τ]ίμη

[45] For the use of the expression in a serious context, cf. *e.g. Il.* 2.394 where the image is linked to the screams of the Argives. For the translation of the word πολυκρότῃ (either ‘wily’ or ‘noisy’, referred to the the plans of Odysseus in Hes. fr. 198, 3 MW), cf. *e.g.* Campbell (1988, 102). For a comic reformulation of the image of the sea, cf. also the *Margites* (cf. *supra* p. 102).
[46] Cf. *e.g.* Campbell (1988, 103). Given the etymological meaning of the proper name, I would suggest emending the participle πίνουσα (v. 4) with πινούσῃ: this would enhance the allusive power of the proper name Gastrodora, who, like the Hipponactean Eurymedontes (cf. pp. 103–4), drinks limitlessly.
[47] This is reported by *P.Oxy.* 2321. For a commentary on the fragments transmitted by this papyrus, cf. *e.g.* Gentili (1958, 179–206). For an updated commentary on this (debated) fragment, cf. Leo (2015, 33–48). Cf. also Serrao (1968, 37) and Slings (1978).
[48] Given the fragmentary condition of the papyrus, I report this fragment with the adscript *iota* to give a better understanding of the condition of the text.

> . . . nor . . . but you have a timid heart as well, you lovely-faced boy, and (your mother) thinks that she tends you (at home), keeping a firm hold on you; (but you escaped to?) the fields of hyacinth, where Cyprian Aphrodite tied her (lovely?) horses freed from the yoke; and you darted down in the midst of the (throng?), so that many of the citizens have found their hearts fluttering.
> Herotima, public highway, public highway . . .

It has been correctly noticed that the word is attested once in *Il.* 15.682, in a scene (vv. 679–84) in which Ajax, encouraging the Achaeans from the deck of the ships, is compared to a skilful horse-rider who shows his skill by jumping on four horses that he has gathered and that he drives towards a great city along a highway.[49] Since Herotima was (probably) a courtesan and if the fragment alludes to the Homeric scene, the vocative λεωφόρε (literally 'the road which brings people') would allude to the woman's clients and would therefore mock the protagonist for her job.[50]

Political and social issues seem to be attested also in literary works which are contemporary to the extant poems of the genre of epic parody. Just like in the poem of Matro, political criticism is well attested, for example, in the contemporary Old and Middle Comedy, where comedians created amusing re-intepretations of epic in order to criticise contemporary characters. In an interesting fragment of Cratinus (fr. 258), for instance, Pericles is abusively called κεφαληγερέτης ('Head-Gatherer'), an adjective built on the Homeric model νεφεληγερέτης ('cloud-gatherer', cf. *e.g. Il.* 1.511), often attributed to Zeus:[51]

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[49] Cf. Gentili (1958, 191).

[50] Cf. Leo (2015, 48). The allusion to the *Iliad* was fostered also by the fact that in the Homeric passage Ajax is riding horses, a practice that (as we have seen in previous fragments) was frequently used to refer to sexual actions. For further allusions to Homeric passages, cf. Gentili (1958, 192). In fr. 103, the speaker proposes a toast using a formula which is probably shaped on Homeric expressions: ἐγὼ δ' ἔχων σκύπφον Ἐρξίωνιτῷ λευκολόφῳ μεστὸν ἐξέπινον ('and I held a full cup and drained it to white-crested Erxion'). This is suggested by two elements. First, the verb ἐκπίνειν, which is attested in Homer (cf. *e.g. Il.* 9.353). Second, the compound λευκολόφῳ, an adjective which describes the white hair of the person celebrated by the toast; the adjective appears to be a methaporical allusion to the crest of epic helmets (cf. *e.g. Il.* 13.805).

[51] Cf. *e.g.* Amado Rodríguez (1994, 110–11), Farioli (2001, 47–52), Magnelli (2004, 158–9) and Olson (2007, 207–8). The fragment is also an Hesiodic parody, as its description of the genealogy recalls the *Theogony*. In v. 2, I accept the emendation Κρόνος against the transmitted Χρόνος (which is printed by KA): cf. *e.g.* Luiselli (1990) and Fiorentini (2018). Additional satirical fragments shaped on Homeric models are frr. 70 and 183: in the former, the word συκοπέδιλε takes explicit inspiration from the epic epithet χρυσοπέδιλε applied to Hera (cf. *e.g. Od.* 11.604, Hes. *Th.* 454), cf. *e.g.* Amado Rodríguez (1994, 111); in the latter, the poet comically alludes to two Homeric verses (*Il.* 9.494–5).

Στάσις δὲ καὶ πρεσβυγενὴς
Κρόνος ἀλλήλοισι μιγέντε
μέγιστον τίκτετον τύραννον,
ὃν δὴ κεφαληγερέταν
θεοὶ καλέουσιν.

Political Strife and ancient-born
Cronus came together
and produced the greatest ruler,
whom the gods in fact call 'the Head-Gatherer.'

In the first parabasis of the *Wasps*, for instance, Aristophanes, in his criticism against his spectators, praises his own *parrhēsia* and his ethical and political assault against the demagogue Cleon (vv. 1010–70) carried out in his *Knights*. In doing this, he compares himself to Heracles and his rival to some mythological monsters (vv. 1029–37), echoing both the Hesiodic and the Homeric hypotexts.[52] Not only is the description of Cleon (1031–3) inspired by the Hesiodic reminiscence of the description of the monster Typhoeus (*Th.* 824–30), carried out through some specific linguistic pointers, but v. 1035 echoes also the Homeric description of the Chimaera (*Il.* 6.181) and the smell of the seal recalls *Od.* 4.406, 442.[53] In the Middle Comedy, an illustrative example of criticism vehiculated through epic parody is attested in fr. 137 of Eubulus, in which the poet criticises, in all likelihood, the shabby members of the Cynic school:[54]

οὗτοι ἀνιπτόποδες χαμαιευνάδες ἀερίοικοι,
ἀνόσιοι λάρυγγες,
ἀλλοτρίων κτεάνων παραδειπνίδες, ὦ λοπαδάγχαι,
λευκῶν ὑπογαστριδίων

[52] For an analysis of this scene, cf. Biles (2006).
[53] Ar. *V.* 1031–3 θρασέως ξυστὰς εὐθὺς ἀπ᾽ ἀρχῆς αὐτῷ τῷ καρχαρόδοντι, | οὗ δεινόταται μὲν ἀπ᾽ ὀφθαλμῶν Κύννης ἀκτῖνες ἔλαμπον, | ἑκατὸν δὲ κύκλῳ κεφαλαὶ κολάκων οἰμωξομένων ἐλιχμῶντο ('boldly standing up right from the start to old Jagged Teeth himself, | whose eyes like the bitch Cynna's flashed terrible beams, | and all around his pate licked a hundred heads of damned flatterers'). Ar. *V.* 1035 φώκης δ᾽ ὀσμήν, Λαμίας δ᾽ ὄρχεις ἀπλύτους, | πρωκτὸν δὲ καμήλου ('the unwashed balls of a Lamia, and the arsehole of a camel'). Among other Homeric allusions in the passage, McDowell (1971, 266) notices that the description of Cleon is a combination of those of Typhoeus, Kerberos and Hydra. Cf. also Paduano (2012, 240–2). Biles (2006) has offered an inclusive commentary on the epic allusions in the passage.
[54] This has been hypothesised *e.g.* by Hunter (1983, 228–9). The translation is taken from Olson (2007).

> You of the unwashed feet, who make your beds on the ground and whose roof is the open sky, unholy gullets, who dine on other people's goods, o snatchers of casserole dishes, full of white belly-steaks

In the first verse of the fragment, the expression ἀνιπτόποδες χαμαιευνάδες ('with unwashed feet sleeping on the ground') is a blatant allusion to three expressions attested in the *Iliad* (16.235) and in the *Odyssey* (10.243, 14.15). In the Iliadic occurrence, the expression is referred to the Selloi, priests of Dodonian Zeus, who used to have unwashed feet and to sleep on the ground; in the two passages from the *Odyssey*, the adjective χαμαιευνάδες refers to pigs. It is clear that Eubulus employs the epic model to allude to the ragged nature of the members of the Cynic school. Likewise, Cratinus Junior, in his *Titans* (fr. 8), insults a parasite called Coridos ('Lark'), who is described in abusive tones:[55]

> Κόρυδον τὸν χαλκότυπον πεφύλαξο,
> † ην μη † σοὶ νομιεῖς αὐτὸν μηθὲν καταλείψειν
> μηδ᾽ ὄψον κοινῇ μετὰ τούτου πώποτε δαίσῃ
> τοῦ Κορύδου, προλέγω σοι· ἔχει γὰρ χεῖρα κραταιάν,
> χαλκῆν, ἀκάματον, πολὺ κρείττω τοῦ πυρὸς αὐτοῦ.
>
> Beware of Lark the bronze-wrought; [corrupt] you should expect he will leave you nothing, nor ought you ever to share seafood with this Lark, I warn you. For he has a mighty hand that is brazen, tireless, and far more powerful than fire itself.

In the last verse of the fragment, the description of the hand of the parasite may allude to the frequent Homeric expression ἀκάματον πῦρ (cf. *e.g. Il.* 5.4, *Od.* 21.181).

5.4 Conclusions

In this chapter, I have analysed the different aspects of criticism which is a fundamental feature of parody, *i.e.* the criticism *of* and *through* the model. Even though parodic criticism is always inherently ambivalent — because the criticism of the model implicitly aknowledges its importance as an influential standpoint —, Greek epic parody played a primary role in the criticism of the stylistic outdateness and of the

[55] The translation is taken from Olson (2006–12).

values of its epic models. As I have tried to show through the ‘intersection’ between the investigation carried out by Russian formalists and by Bakhtin on modern parody and the epic criticism attested in the poems by Archilochus and Xenophanes, it is surely plausible that the same disruptive attitude against its model characterised also classical *parōidia*. At the same time, I have also pointed out also how the humorous reworkings of epic were used as a tool for the criticism of ‘external’ subjects in classical *parōidia*. This is attested in the fragments of Hegemon and Matro, in which it is easy to find verbal and allusive attacks against contemporary professional and social categories such as those of rhapsodes and politicians. This type of criticism is also well attested in earlier analogues (Archilochus, Hipponax and Anacreon) and in the Old and Middle Comedy. It is therefore easy to see that the critical tendency of the authors of classical *parōidia* is far from unattested in previous and contemporary poetry: on the contrary, the criticism detected in classical *parōidia* represented the natural prosecution of an archaic poetical tendency and, just like modern parody, Greek *parōidia* was indeed persistently characterised by a critical spirit.

Conclusions

In this work, I examined the genre of Greek epic parody from a theoretical and diachronic perspective, focusing on its historical origins, its development until the classical age (fifth and fourth centuries BC) and its most pivotal features. In the first chapter, despite the lack of ancient definitions and because of the multifaceted meaning of the Greek word *parōidia* in ancient times, I tried to clarify the notion of the word from a historical perspective, in order to pinpoint its several uses from the archaic to the classical period. In the first section of this chapter, more specifically, I pointed out that the word *parōidia* was originally employed with a double connotation, because it identified at the same time a specific *poetical practice*, attested since the beginning of Greek literature, and its 'consolidation' in an out-and-out genre in the fifth century BC. I consequently identified a list of poems which have constituted the basis for the investigation of the genre in the following chapters. The third section of this chapter examined the evidence on *parōidia* afforded by stone inscriptions: such evidence offered crucial insights into the performative setting of the genre of *parōidia*. In the second chapter, I considered the intrinsic connection between humour and *parōidia* and the typologies of humour attested in the poems of epic parody. In the first part of the chapter, I pointed out that the ancient Greeks were already aware of the humorous and dialogic nature of parody: three ancient sources seem to demonstrate this state of things and to attest to the understanding of the peculiar comic mechanism which stands at the basis of parody, *i.e.* incongruence. In the second part of this chapter, I underlined the most crucial typologies of comic techniques attested in the poems of classical epic parody, noting that Greek parodists produced humour by playing with epic stereotypes and hypotexts. In the last part of this chapter, I traced these parodic techniques in earlier and contemporary poems in order to point out that the epic tradition was the object of comic reformulations even before the codification of epic parody as a genre in the fifth century BC and that the techniques exploited to achieve this purpose were the same that were employed also by classical epic parody. The third chapter explored the popular background of epic parody, which is reflected in several popular elements (both thematic and linguistic) attested in the extant poems. In the fourth chapter, I first highlighted the importance of the hexametric metre in the

definition of *parōidia* and the common practice of Greek parodists to play with metres and their intrinsic axiological value, underlining the humour that lies in the use of dactylic metres for parodic purposes: through the description of 'low' subjects in the stereotypical metre of the most solemn genre of antiquity, *i.e.* epic poetry, Greek parody triggered a comic mechanism based — once again — on incongruence. In the second part of this chapter, I collected evidence on the mixture of iambic and dactylic metres in several poems that display nuances of epic parody, stressing that the mixture of these two axiologically different metres was exploited for the creation of humorous results. The last chapter of this thesis investigated the criticism that is inherently connected to parody. More specifically, I emphasised how parodic criticism targets the outdateness and the repetivity of its model, as well as contemporary people and professional categories.

Despite the conclusions reached by this research, one must acknowledge that the investigation of *parōidia* in Greece is still an open field, and that many holes in the scholarship still need to be filled. This thesis above all tackles the development of the genre of epic parody until the classical period, but *parōidia* did not stop after the fourth century BC: on the contrary, it continued to be composed and performed for a long time after the classical age (as the epigraphic evidence analysed in the first chapter proves). Even if *parōidia* underwent several influential changes in the Hellenistic age (and later) in terms of means and types of performance, audience, and fruition, epic parody went on both as a clear-cut genre and as a literary practice. In the former group, one must recall, for instance, the poems and the fragments included by Brandt in his collection and edition of epic parody (for example, the *Batrachomyomachia*), literary works that I have not analysed in this thesis because they went beyond the chronological boundaries established at the beginning of my research. Hellenistic epic parody finds an interesting re-elaboration also in the philosophical parody of Timon of Phlius, who employs the epic model to produce a sarcastic depiction of philosophical doctrines in his *Silloi*. As for the second group, one can mention the comic epic allusions contained in the *Hymns* of Callimachus, in the *Mimiambs* of Herodas, in the *Idylls* of Theocritus, in New comedy and in the hilarotragedies

composed by Rhinton, Sophron and Sopater.[56] Interesting parallels can be drawn also between literary epic parody and the visual arts, as well as with similar epic parodies in other archaic cultures, such as those attested in the Middle East and in Rome.[57] In general, it is possible to affirm that the urge to parody seems to be innate in human beings and that consequently any historical period and culture tends to parody its cultural and literary models.

This thesis has tackled epic parody in classical Greece; a study of epic parody in post-classical Greece is still a *desideratum*.

[56] Cf. the *Hymn to Demeter* by Callimachus (*Hymn* VI), in which the grotesque tale of Erysichthon is portrayed with amusing nuances and with the employment of epic images: cf. *e.g.* Mc Kay (1962), Benvenuti Falciai (1976) and Hopkinson (2008, 18–30). As for Herodas, cf. Esposito (2001), who has deeply investigated the Homeric allusions in *Mimiambs* 1 and 8. Theocritus, in his *Idyll* 11, describes a clumsy Polyphemus in love with the nymph Galatea, thus mocking the depiction of the Cyclops in the *Odyssey*. As for the New Comedy, we know that Diphilus composed several plays with a mythological model, and so did Philemon (cf. *e.g.* Bruzzese 2010): no comprehensive works have been produced so far on this topic, but scholars have pointed out that these plays are probably parodies of tragedies based on epic subjects rather than of Homeric epic *per se*.

[57] Concerning visual humour, cf. *e.g.* Mitchell (2009). We have some evidence of playful reworkings of epic in other ancient cultures too: Jiménez (2017), for instance, has pointed out the parodic nature of the Babylonian *Disputational Poems*, highlighting a set of characteristics that also appear in Greek epic parody. Epic parody was also common in Roman culture and it has not been properly investigated yet: cf. *e.g.* Schröter (1967) and the bibliography provided by Connors (2005, 144–5).

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